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The Promised Land

BY

LADISLAS REYMONT

THE PEASANTS

AUTUMN

WINTER

SPRING

SUMMER

THE PROMISED LAND

TRANSLATED
FROM THE POLISH OF
LADISLAS REYMONT
BY
M. H. DZIEWICKI

VOLUME ONE

NEW YORK
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THE PROMISED LAND

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A list of
the chief characters
in The Promised Land
appears
at the end of
Volume One

CHAPTER I

LODZ was awakening.

One first shrill blast, rending the silence of the small hours, and followed by the ululations of sirens all over the town, noisier and still more noisy, tearing and ripping the air to tatters with their harsh uncouth din—a chorus of gigantic cocks, as it were, crowing from those metal throats of theirs.

With long, dark bodies and slender upstanding necks, looming out of the night, the fog, and the rain, the big factories were slowly rousing up, scintillating with many a flame, and beginning to live and move amid the darkness.

A thin March rain, not without sleet, was falling, falling; covering Lodz with thick viscid mistiness, pattering upon the iron-plate roofs, pouring thence down to the pavements and the black miry, sloughy streets, streaming down the bare tree-trunks, marshalled in low rows close to the walls and shivering in the cold and tossed about by the wind—the wind that now swept the thoroughfares buried in ooze, now rattled and shook the fences, and now tried the roofs; or again would swoop into a quagmire or howl through the branches of a tree.

Boroviecki, awaking, struck a light, just as the alarm-clock set up a furious whirring and ringing, announcing five A. M.

"Tea, Matthew!" he cried, upon the manservant's appearance.

"It's ready," was the reply.

"Are the others still asleep?"

"I shall wake them at once at your order, sir. But last night Mr. Moritz told me he wanted to stay in bed longer this morning."

"Go, wake them.—Have the keys been taken?" Boroviecki asked.

"Schwartz came for them himself."

"Did anybody telephone during the night?"

"Kunke was on duty, and told me nothing about any call when he left."

Boroviecki then hastened to inquire what news there had been in town, while putting on his clothes all the time in a great hurry.

"Oh, only a workman stabbed in the Gayer market-place."

"Nothing else?"

"Ah, yes; Goldberg's works in Cegielniana Street * have burned down. Our fire brigade did come out; but all had gone merrily on, and only the walls were standing.—The fire had come from the drying-room."

"Anything else?"

"Oh no. Everything has run quite well, quite smoothly," and he laughed a nasty cackling laugh.

"Pour out my tea for me. I shall wake Mr. Moritz myself."

Boroviecki, now fully dressed, made for the neighbouring apartment, passing through the dining-room, where a lamp that hung from the ceiling cast its hard white light on a round table, with the cloth laid, on which stood a number of cups and a resplendent samovar.

"Max, it's five—get up!" he called out, opening the door of a room in darkness, out of which came a puff of close air, heavily scented with violets.

Max made no answer, but a creaking, crackling noise came from the bed within.

"Moritz!" Boroviecki then cried to the man next door.

"Not asleep. Could not sleep all night."

"What was the matter?"

"I was thinking of that business of ours—reckoning things up, calculating—and so the time went by."

"Do you know, Goldberg has burned his works, and, as Matthew says, done it 'quite smoothly'?"

* Brick-kiln Street.—*Translator's Note.*

"That is no news to me," Moritz answered with a yawn. "How could you know?"

"Why, a month since, I was sure he would be forced to. A wonder he put things off so long. He won't get a kopek the more from the insurance people for his delay."

"So, then, he has balanced his accounts!—Was there a great amount of goods?" Boroviecki asked.

"If you mean of *insured* goods—there was."

And they both roared with laughter.

Boroviecki returned to the dining-room and took his breakfast, while Moritz was as usual looking for his clothes all over his room, and swearing at Matthew.

"If you leave my things about any more, I'll smash your face all to pieces—make it as scarlet-red as any print of ours!"

"Morning!" Max bawled, having awakened at last.

"Won't you get up? It's past five."

His reply was lost in the hubbub made by the sirens, which sounded as though just outside, and bellowed all together for some seconds, so loud that the very windows were trembling.

Moritz, wearing only his overcoat thrown over his shoulders above his underclothing, now came in and sat by the stove, where a quantity of resinous chips were joyously crackling.

"Are you staying at home?" Boroviecki inquired.

"I am. Weis had asked me to go to Tomashov and take him a set of new carders. But I shall not just now. It's cold, and I do not feel inclined."

"And you, Max, are you staying indoors as well?"

"Where should I go in such a hurry? To those scurvy shanties?—Besides, I had a row with father yesterday."

"You and your eternal rows with everybody! They will end badly for you, Max!" Moritz growled in strong disgust, as he poked the fire.

"Mind your own business, you!" Max shouted from the other room. The bed creaked noisily, and Max, in underwear and slippers, stood in the doorway.

"Well, but it is my business.—Very much so."

"Let me alone, and don't worry me.—What! After Charles here has just awakened me (the devil knows why), must I have this fellow come ragging me into the bargain?"—And returning to his own room, he presently came back, carrying his clothes, which he proceeded to put on.

"You see, it's this enterprise of ours that you are injuring with your continual gibes and taunts," Moritz went on to say, settling on his pinched Semitic nose the glasses that were always falling off again.

"What! where! how's that?"

"Everywhere. Yesterday at the Blumentals' you told them that most of our manufacturers were mere swindlers and thieves."

"So I did; and what I said I'll stand by." He smiled scornfully at Moritz, eyeing him with an expression of considerable dislike.

"You, Max Baum," Moritz continued, "have to refrain from such sayings; you have not the right to speak, I tell you."

"For what reason, pray?" Max said, but in a lower voice, and leaning over the table.

"If you can't see by yourself, I must point it out. First: because what others do concerns you in no wise. Does it matter to you whether they are honest men or robbers? We are —all of us—here in Lodz for the sole purpose of doing business, and of doing good business. None of us intends to stay here for ever; everyone makes his money in the way he is able. You are a Red, a Radical——"

"I am an honest man!" the other snapped at him, whilst pouring out his tea.

Boroviecki, with his elbows on the table and his face hid in his hands, sat and listened.

At Max's reply Moritz turned away angrily and his glasses fell off and struck against his chair. His thin lips wore a sneer of bitter irony. Smoothing his scanty, yet pitch-black beard with a hand that several diamond rings adorned, he

answered: "No nonsense, Max. If you run about making such public accusations, you may injure our credit. We three, men without capital, are about to start a factory, and so require credit, and so too the favourable opinion of such as can give credit. We need at present to be pleasant fellows, complaisant, good-natured, kindly, in a word. If Borman tells you Lodz is a vile place, tell him it is vile as much as you like—he's a big fish, and must be humoured. Yet what was it you said to Knoll about the man? That he was a lout and a blockhead! Man, man! no one is a blockhead who has got millions by his brains—and has stuck fast to those millions (of which we want our share)! We shall talk of such men and run them down at our ease when we have the money, just as we are now forced to sit close because we need them. But let Charles speak out and say whether I am not in the right: I have at heart the future of all three of us."

"Moritz is pretty completely in the right," Boroviecki uncompromisingly declared, looking with cold grey eyes into those of the indignant Max.

"You are right," the latter rejoined; "I know it well.—Right in a Lodzian sense, though!—But remember: I am an honest man!"

"Bah! A stock phrase, an old hackneyed, parrot phrase!"

"Moritz, you're a vile Jew!"

"And you, a namby-pamby German fool!"

"You are quarrelling about words, both of you," Boroviecki coolly remarked, as he proceeded to put on his overcoat. "Sorry I can stay no longer, but I have to get our new printing department under way."

Here Baum, now quite calmed down, reverted to the conversation they had had together not long since, and their resolution to start a factory.

"We shall do so!" they cried.

"Yes. I have no money; neither have you. Nor has he." And Max burst out laughing.—"So," he went on, "we have just enough, just exactly enough to start quite a big factory.

What have we to lose? And," he added after a pause, "there is always something to gain. Well then, shall we or shall we not start one? Once more, which is it to be?"

"We shall, we shall!" they answered together.

"Ah, what was that about Goldberg's works? Burned down, eh?" Baum queried suddenly.

"Yes—and his accounts balanced. Oh, a shrewd fellow he is, and like to make millions."

"Or—end in jail."

"Fool's chatter!" Moritz blurted out impatiently. "Talk that sort of thing in Berlin or Paris or Warsaw: not here in Lodz. It would create unpleasantness."

Max said not a word.

Again the sirens lifted up their harsh nerve-shattering voices, repeating ever louder and louder their morning song.

"Well, I'm off," Charles said. "Till our next meeting!—Don't squabble, lie down again, and dream of the millions we shall make!"

"And made they shall be!" the two others shouted in chorus; and all three shook hands in good-fellowship.

"What's the date?" said Max. "Let's note it down: it's well worth bearing in mind."

"And put a parenthesis after," added Charles, "for the man's name who first tries to trick the others."

"You, Boroviecki," Moritz returned in cold level tones, "are a gentleman. You sport a coat of arms on your visiting-card, and put "Von" to your signatures. And yet, more than any of us, you are a man of Lodz."

"I?" Charles exclaimed. "And what are you, then?"

"A man who at any rate does not care to babble. I care to earn money. Your people and the Germans are first-rate, but in the talking line."

Charles Boroviecki buttoned his overcoat carefully, turned the collar up, and walked out.

It was drizzling steadily, and the rain fell in slanting lines half-way up the little windows of the cottages that stood huddled close to one another along that end of Piotrovska Street, only in places thrust aside, as it were, by a huge

factory or the imposing mansion of some manufacturer.

A row of stunted lime-trees, bordering the side-walk, bent their heads to the blasts roaring down the miry street, which was almost pitch-dark; for the infrequent lamps gave out only tiny circles of yellow light that glimmered upon the thick black mud, and on the dim figures of the workmen in their hundreds, hurrying in hot haste and deep silence to the call of the sirens, now heard at rarer and rarer intervals in the neighbourhood.

"Those millions—shall we make them?" Charles wondered, halting to cast a glance at the jumble of chimneys, looming up out of the dark, and at the sombre motionless bulks of the factories, which rose on every side in stony stillness, and whose red towering walls seemed still to be rising before him as he gazed.

While he was standing thus, someone hurrying past called out: "Morning!"

"Morning!" he murmured in reply, and walked on once more, his heart racked with gnawing doubts. Thousands of thoughts, figures, combinations, and conjectures were whirling about in his mind, until he scarce could tell where he was or whither he was going.

Great numbers of workers, in black silent swarms, would issue suddenly from side streets that looked like canals of sable mud, and out of houses which arose on the skirts of the town, as so many huge dust-heaps; and they filled Piotrovska with a confused noise of footsteps, of twinkling, jingling tin lanterns, with the dry clatter of wooden soles, and with the sucking squash of feet in the slushy mire.

On they poured, overflowing the whole thoroughfare, filling the side-walks, plodding along through the mud and water-pools in the middle; some to join the straggling mobs outside the gates of their factory, whilst others, walking forward in long files, disappeared within the gates.

Out of the profound gloom, light after light began to appear. Black squat masses of building blazed in a sudden with hundreds of flaming windows, like so many eyes of fire; and all at once electric suns shone and dispelled the shadows

where they were suspended, scintillating in the vacuum of their globes.

Now white smoke-wreaths soared up from the mighty forest of chimneys over which they drifted to and fro, in the likeness of a vault upheld by countless pillars and quivering to every ripple of the electric light.

The streets were all but empty, the lanterns were extinguished, and the last sirens had uttered their voices. In the hush that followed, only the drip-drop of the rain and the whistling of the wind were to be heard in the street. Taverns and bakeries were opening now, and stray glimmers were seen in garrets, or in the window of some basement into which the mud from the street was slowly descending.

But in more than a hundred factories life was seething—seething feverishly. The dull roar of the engines rumbled through the foggy air, and resounded in the ears of Borowiecki, who was still pacing the street and gazing at the factory windows, behind which were dimly discernible the workmen's figures and the outlines of the huge machines.

He had no mind to start work just at present. He had a joy in walking about thus, focussing in his mind's eye that factory of his that was still in the future, calling it into being, starting it, and watching how it worked. So absorbed was he in this day-dream that now and again he could distinctly hear the machinery going, and feel his imaginary building as already in actual existence. He saw the bales of goods, the offices, the purchasers pouring in, and the whole place alive and humming with activity. He even had in mind a flood of wealth, rolling as it were to his very feet. He smiled ecstatically; his eyes shone bright, though brimming with tears, and a flush of intense joy suffused his pale handsome face.—With a quick movement of his hand he stroked his beard, moist with rain, and came to himself once more.

"I am a fool!" he muttered, disgusted with himself, and looked around as though he feared someone might have witnessed that passing fit of weakness.

No one was near; but the grey dawn had come; and as the day broke, with faint beams plunged in mist, the out-

lines of the trees and factories and houses peered out little by little, ever more and more distinct.

From beyond Piotrovska turnpike came long lines of peasants' carts, splashing through ruts and mud-holes; great vans and lorries went the opposite way, laden with coal, and with them open platforms on wheels, piled with spun yarn, bales of cotton, dry goods, or barrels; whilst among these there glided swiftly little britzkas, or tradesmen's traps, hurrying to business, and a stray cab here and there, with some belated official inside.

Towards the end of Piotrovska, Boroviecki turned off into a narrow lane without any side-walk, and lit only by a few suspended lanterns and by the light from an enormous factory, already in full swing, all the windows of its four storeys pouring forth floods of splendour. Entering, he hurriedly changed into a dingy, much stained blouse, and made for his own department.

CHAPTER II

OOD day to you, Murray!" cried Charles.

Clad in a long, blue wrapper, Murray appeared from behind a row of movable cauldrons, in which the dyes were being prepared. In the electric light, saturated with vapours of many prismatic hues, his long, bony, clean-shaven face, lit up with eyes of so pale a blue that they seemed to have faded from their colour, gave something of the impression of a caricature in *Punch*.

"Ah, Boroviecki! I wanted to see you last night; but when I got to your rooms, I found only Moritz, whom I dislike, and so did not wait for you."

"He's a good fellow, though."

"Much I care for his good-fellowship!"

"Is No. 57 printing yet?"

"Surely. They got the dye from me."

"Is it fast?"

"Well, the first few metres were not quite up to the mark. —Oh, and the Central has ordered five hundred pieces of that llama of yours."

"Aha!—No. 24—the sea-green tint."

"Bech, too—at the Branch Depot—has telephoned for the same amount. Shall we set to work at that?"

"Too late this day. We have pressing orders, and summer textiles to print that are still more pressing."

"They have telephoned for our flannelette, No. 7."

"We are getting them calendered. I must go at once and see about them."

"But I had something to tell you."

"I'm listening," Charles replied, with more politeness than cordiality.

Murray took his hand and led him into a corner beyond the large barrels that people came continually to ladle dyes out of. The "Kitchen," as this department was called, stood in profound shadow. Underneath low-hanging penthouses like steel umbrellas, broad copper stirrers revolved slowly by machinery, diffusing the dyes throughout the great cauldrons, which shone with a ruddy metallic glow.

The whole place was quivering to the palpitations of the engines. Long transmission belts, like pale yellow serpents of interminable length, were running at furious speed just beneath the ceiling, whirling round above the double line of coppers, gliding along the walls and crossing one another so high up as scarcely to be visible through the pungent fumes that continually mounted from the cauldrons below, and dimmed the lights, and escaped into the rooms beyond by every outlet available.

Forms of workmen in their shirt-sleeves, stained and grimy all over with the various dyes, flitted about, noiseless as ghosts, to vanish in the murky air; and small trucks, laden with dyes quite ready for use, rumbled along as they came and went on their way to the printing-chamber and the dyeing-vats.

A horribly acrid odour of sulphur pervaded the place.

Murray now whispered low in Charles's ear: "I bought a set of furniture yesterday. Furniture, look you, upholstered in yellow silk, Empire style! for the parlour; for the dining-room, a Henri IV oaken suite. And for the boudoir——"

"And when's the wedding to come off?" Boroviecki rather impatiently cut in.

"H'm—well, it's not quite decided as yet. As soon as possible would be my notion."

"Then you have proposed at last?" Charles queried, somewhat satirically eyeing Murray's odd and rather ludicrous figure. The man's notable stoop seemed at the moment nothing less than a deformity; and with his strongly protruding under jaw, he forcibly reminded Boroviecki of an ape.

"In a way, in a way," Murray returned. "She told me only last Sunday how she would like her home furnished.

I questioned her on every particular, and she answered just like a woman talking of her future home."

"It was just the same last time."

"Ah, but then I felt not half so sure as I do now!" was the eager reply.

"Well, things being so, I wish you joy with all my heart; when may I see your wife that is to be?"

"Oh, all in good time—in good time."

"Yes, and I think you'll get married in good time too," Charles muttered, with a touch of irony.

"You will call on me to-morrow, won't you? I must have your opinion on the furniture."

"All right."

"At what time?"

"After dinner."

Murray went back to his laboratory and his dyes, while Charles hastened away, making for the dye-chamber along many a passage and corridor blocked with tiny carts full of wet and dripping cotton goods, and with piles of cottons heaped high on the floor, awaiting their turn.

At each step he was called upon to decide matters of every kind. Now and again he would examine a test bit of dyed stuff brought by some workman, and pass judgment: "Good"; or: "One test more," and stride on in the chaotic hubbub of an inferno, with the eyes of a hundred men upon him.

Everything—floors, ceilings, walls, and machines—was vibrating with the din—motors roared, transmission belts and gearing bands buzzed and rustled and hissed, trucks rattled on the asphalt flooring, wheels hummed noisily; whilst out of that sea of confused noise-waves, there would at times emerge a piercing scream, or the ponderous snorting of the biggest of all the dynamos.

"Mr. Boroviecki!"

Charles strained his eyes to make out who called, but could not. In the dense mass of vapour the dyeing-room was filled with, there was nothing discernible but the faintly outlined machines.

"Mr. Boroviecki!"

He started: someone had caught hold of his arm.

"You, Mr. President!" he exclaimed on recognizing the owner of the place.

"I am chasing you, but how fast you fly about!"

"Work, Mr. President, work!"

"Yes, yes, I quite understand.—But I am just dead tired."

After a pause, "Getting on, hey?" he asked.

"We are," was Charles's curt reply, as he walked on.

The other, leaning on his shoulder, dragged himself on toilsomely with the aid of a stout stick. Though he was bent almost double, his round red hawk-eyes were levelled straight in front of him, out of a large, shining, circular face adorned with short side-whiskers and a moustache cut in a straight line over the under lip.

"Well, and is this Watson plant turning out good work?"

"It is printing fifteen thousand metres every day."

"That's not much," he remarked in an undertone, and, letting go Charles's shoulder, seated himself on a truck laden with raw percale, pulled down his heavy caftan, and remained at rest with his hands on the top of his stick.

Away Boroviecki darted towards the big dyeing-vats. Over these, and stretched upon large revolving cylinders, were rolls of stuffs which dipped into the dye, splashing it on to the faces and over the shirts of the men; these stood by, motionless, now and then taking up some of the liquid to see whether the dye, constantly being absorbed by the stuffs, was still sufficiently strong.

There were some score of cylinders, standing in a row, and whirling with never-ceasing wearisome monotony; and the long, twisting rolls of cloth, moving slantwise as they soaked up the dye, gleamed through the hazy air in dull stains and patches—red, ochre, and blue.

Further away, beyond the double line of iron pillars in great number that went all the length of that vast chamber to sustain the upper storeys of the factory, came the rinsing-plant: long troughs filled with boiling water, frothing with soap and soda, washing-machines and wringers, all of which

the raw stuff was made to pass through. The spray and foam from the beaters were wafted about the whole room, making so dense a cloud over the rinsing-troughs that the lights glimmered through them as in a glass, darkly.

Over the stuffs, when rinsed, the "grippers" closed their jaws, drawing them up and out, as on crossed arms stretched forth. Thus they delivered them to the workmen, who, seizing them with long poles, tumbled them into the tiny carts every now and then pushed forward.

"Mr. Boroviecki!" the manufacturer called out to someone—a passing shadow looming through the fog; but it was not he.

He rose to his feet—those poor feet of his, so racked with rheumatism—and shambled about the room, in whose hot atmosphere he felt a joy. He loved to steep his aching limbs in a room reeking with those acrid fumes, and running with water splashed about everywhere from rinsing-tubs and vats, streaming underfoot, and dripping in an all but continuous downpour from the ceiling.

The furious clanking of the centrifugals, as they drove the moisture out of the drying stuffs, sounded like a tremulous incessant moan: it travelled from chamber to chamber, working on the nerves of the men employed to watch what went forward, completely absorbed though they seemed in the working of the machines; and it died away only where the already printed stuffs hung out to dry, like many-coloured waving flags.

Charles was now in the adjoining room. Here some inferior cloth for men's apparel was being dyed black by English machinery of antiquated type. Here the light streamed in through many a window, giving a greenish hue to the dark vapours and the men who, with folded arms and motionless as columns of basalt, watched the machines through which the cloth was passing—many thousand metres of it—and taking up the foaming splashy black dye, made fast at once by the mordant.

The factory was in full swing, and the walls perpetually

vibrating. Elevators, sunk into the thickness of the walls, connected the ground-floor with the upper storeys. Every minute there came a dull crash from some part of the great chamber: it was an elevator taking up or bringing down men, trucks, and dyed fabrics.

Here, too, daylight now began to peer. Its dingy rays filtered athwart the tiny panes, much soiled with dust and steam; it brought out with greater distinctness the outlines of machinery and men, but everything was tinted a greyish green, save for the long streaks of red vapour floating about, and the halo-wreathed gas-lights that shone through the dust-laden air. Both men and machinery looked like phantoms carried along by some resistless motive power—specks and shreds fluttering hither and thither, now huddled together in a tangled mass, now driven once more apart by the whirlpool that overwhelmed them.

Herman Bucholc, owner of the works, having inspected the dyeing-vats, moved on farther.

He went through all the pavilions, then passed above by an elevator (to go down again on foot); he made his way along the passages, looked over the machines, examined the goods they made. At times he would eye the hands with a lowering gaze; at others he spoke a few words that in an instant flew all over the place. Then he would seat himself, often beside doorways, on bales of goods; or hide away somewhere, to reappear in quite another part of the building—in the coal depot, or amongst the goods trucks that stood lined up on one side of the large courtyard, which was fenced round by the high factory walls.

He was everywhere, and passed by sombre and silent like an autumn night. His appearance would cut short all conversation; heads bent down, figures shrank into themselves, men withdrew their gaze as if they were afraid to meet those eyes of his.

He often came across Charles, as the latter was patrolling his department, and their eyes would meet in a friendly glance. Herman Bucholc liked him, as the manager of his

printing-chamber. Not only so: he even valued the man at the full amount (ten thousand roubles) of his yearly salary. "He's the very best machine I have in the whole department," Bucholc often thought, as he looked at him.

He had himself no longer any connexion with the work of the factory, which was now managed by his son-in-law; but the habits of a lifetime brought him there every day along with the men. He always breakfasted and stayed there till noon. Dinner over, he would either drive to town, or lounge about stock-brokers' offices, warehouses, or cotton stores. He could by no means live apart from the mighty kingdom he had founded by his industrial genius and the labour of a lifetime. He felt the want of knowing himself surrounded with those walls that throbbed with such intense activity; he was at ease when, and only when, he walked amongst lines of transmission belts in motion, and sniffed the pungent odours of dyes, of bleaching-chambers, of raw fabrics, and the strong scent of grease seething in the engine-joints.

He was now seated in the printing-room, shading his eyes and gazing round him at the place, well lighted by large windows, and at the printing-machines working at full speed and in dull, depressing silence. They worked and worked on, always at the same rate of unchanging speed; and never-ending were the lengths of tissues which, passing between the copper cylinders that pressed the coloured patterns into them, vanished into the drying-room on an upper floor.

The men behind the machines fed the stuffs to them with quiet reposeful movements; the foremen stood in front, one or another of them every now and then stooping forward to examine the cylinders, supply more colours out of big tubs standing by, and once more stand at gaze, looking up at the innumerable metres of stuffs flying swiftly past. Every printing-machine had its own separate steam-engine, and each of these a great fly-wheel, like a shield of polished metal, whirling on its axis with such extreme velocity that nothing could be seen of it but a sort of silvery halo that scattered a shimmering splendour all around.

Boroviecki too had slipped in here, to know how the machines just installed did their work, compare samples of freshly printed articles with each other, and give directions. Sometimes he had with a gesture stopped the working of one of the huge machines; and having scrutinized it carefully, he had passed on. The grand co-ordinated movement of the whole factory, the hundreds of machines, the thousands of people watching them with the most intense and all but religious attention, the vast heaps of goods which lay there or were borne from room to room—from wash-house to dyeing-chamber, from dyeing-chamber to drying-room, thence to be calendered and off again ever so many times, before they came out, finished and perfect—all this entranced and enthralled him.

Only at intervals did he rest awhile in his own private room, close to the "Kitchen," as it was called. There—whilst preparing to overhaul the samples sent from abroad and pasted into the great piles of albums his table was littered with, and to devise other new patterns—he would fall to thinking, or rather trying to think, about himself and that plan of starting a factory which he and his two friends had been forming. But he could not; nor indeed could he retire within himself for a moment. This factory's noise was too loud, even here in his cabinet; its throbbings and pulsations reverberated through his nerves, and almost blended with his heart-beats. It would not let him alone; it dragged him by force out of himself, and drew him back to the services and duties expected of everyone within its sphere and control.

Up he started, once again on the move. But the day passed away, slow and wearisome beyond measure. At about four he went to the cashier's office, where he took tea and telephoned, inviting Moritz to a play that night: some charity performance by a troupe of amateurs.

"Welt," someone told him, "left us but half an hour ago."

"Was he here then?"

"Yes, and took fifty pieces of white goods."

"For himself?"

"No: Amfiloff's order; for Charkoff.—May I offer you a cigar?"

"To be sure you may; I feel awfully run down."

And he sat down on a tall stool at an unused desk, and lit the weed.

The head accountant, who had very respectfully treated him to the cigar, stood in front of him, filling a pipe; while several youngsters, perched upon benches that were mere strips of wood, were busy writing in big red-lined books.

To Boroviecki's tired nerves the silence that reigned here, the scratching sounds of the pens, and the clock's monotonous ticks were the reverse of soothing.

"What news, Mr. Schwartz?" he asked.

"Oh, Rosenberg has failed."

"To what amount, pray?"

"We can't say yet for sure; but my notion is he'll compound with his creditors. What use would it have been to come an ordinary cropper?" And he chuckled as he pressed the moist tobacco into his pipe.

"Does our firm lose anything?"

"It depends on how many roubles he pays in the hundred."

"Does Bucholc know?"

"Till now he has not been round here. But when he knows, ah! how his corns will shoot! The man's a bad loser."

"He may die of a stroke!" one of the lads at work said in an undertone.

"That were a pity!"

"Truly, and a great pity! Lord forbid!"

"May he live to be a hundred, and be master of a hundred millions, and palaces, and factories too!"

"And may he," added the same whispering voice as before, "die of cholera a hundred times over!"

There was silence again.

Schwartz glanced furiously at the boys who were writing, and then at Boroviecki deprecatingly, as if to excuse himself; but the latter, seemingly bored, was gazing out of the window.

The air of the place was really saturated with boredom. Its walls, panelled up to the very ceiling with wood painted to imitate oak, and crowded on every side with shelves and books arranged in rows upon them, seemed to be of a dingy yellow hue; for opposite the window a great four-storey building of bare red bricks shed a dismal greyish-rusty glimmer into the office.

The yard it looked out on was paved with asphalt, and traversed by occasional pedestrians. Across this yard, at the height of the first floor, and with a droning purr that incessantly shook the office windows, ran several large transmission bands, as thick as a wrestler's arm.

And over the factory there stretched the expanse of the sky—a dull dirty sheet, dripping with drizzling rain, that ran down the dirty walls in streaks more dirty still, and soaking into the cotton and coal-dust with which the windows were covered, formed into viscid loathsome clots upon their surface.

A samovar, heated by gas in a corner of the office, was beginning to simmer.

"Mr. Horn, will you kindly give me a cup of tea?"

Horn brought him one and remained standing by Borowiecki's side.

"Anything the matter?" asked the latter, whose relations with the young fellow were rather intimate.

"Nothing," Horn snarled, darting a surly glance at Schwartz.

"You seem much out of sorts."

"The gentleman," Schwartz put in, "is not at ease here. Drawing-room life has made it hard for him to work in our office—or anywhere."

"Cattle," Horn retorted angrily, but so low that Schwartz did not catch the words, "cattle may take easily to the yoke: men cannot."

He went back to his desk, where he sat gazing, now at the red walls, now out of the window, on the heaps of carded cotton ready to be spun.

"Another cup of tea, please," Charles said to Horn. There

was something wrong and he wanted to find out what it was.

Horn brought the tea with his eyes fixed on the ground, and was turning away, when Charles said to him: "Mr. Horn, would you mind coming round to my room in half an hour?"

"Very well, sir. There is something I wished to see you about, but I was putting it off till to-morrow. Perhaps you would hear me now!"

And he was about to unbosom himself, when a woman, driving four children in front of her, suddenly forced her way in.

"Praised be Jesus Christ!" she said under her breath; and, glancing round at the many heads that looked up from their desks, she bent down to Charles's very feet; for he stood nearest to her, and was the most prepossessing of them all.

"Honoured master," she said, speaking in the primitive dialect of the peasants, "behold me here with a request: for that my husband's head has been plucked off by a machine, wherefore I am now a lone widow with children, and in misery along with them. And thus have I come to beg for justice, that you may grant us assistance, because that machine has torn off my husband's head, O honoured master!" And, bursting into tears, she again bowed as low as Boroviecki's knees.

"You get out!" Schwartz thundered at her. "Be off with you! This is not the place where such matters are settled."

"Be quiet, you!" Charles shouted, turning on Schwartz.

"By your leave, sir," said Schwartz, "that woman has been haunting every one of our offices for the last six months, and there's no getting rid of her."

"But why isn't the business settled and done with?"

"Shall I tell you, sir? Why, that lout put his head under the wheel on purpose; he wanted to work no more and cheat the factory. Are we then to pay money for this woman and her bastards?"

"What! what! my children bastards?" she shrieked, rushing at Schwartz, who shrunk behind his desk in bodily fear.

"Woman, be still!" cried he; then: "Madam, I beseech

you, be calm—and tell your well-born little ones not to weep," he added, shaking all over, as he pointed to the children, who were clinging to their mother's skirts and roaring lustily.

"Honoured master," she said to Charles, "so far he has spoken true: that ever since the potato-digging season I have been coming here; but if they put me off for ever, promising to pay, I must for ever beg and beg as I do."

"Be easy; I shall speak to the chief to-day. Come again in a week, and you shall be righted."

"Oh may our Lord Jesus and She of Chenstohova grant thee health—wealth—honours of all kinds, beloved master!" she exclaimed, falling down on her knees to kiss his hands.

He broke away from her and went out, but lingered a little in the main passage; and as she followed him out too, he asked her: "From where are ye?"

"O sir! I am from near Skiernievice."

"And have you been long in Lodz?"

"It will be two years now since we all came here—to our undoing!"

"Do you go out to work at all now?"

"And is it any work they would give me to do, those pagans, those pestilential heretics? Moreover, with my orphans here about me, is there anything that I can do?"

"How then do you live?"

"In misery, honoured sir; in misery. Even when my poor husband was alive, we often and often had only a pinch of salt to eat, and hunger with it; still we lived somehow, though how I know not. Now he is gone, I do some chores in the Old Town, and now and then I get a little washing—and that's a fact." She spoke volubly, wrapping her children up in filthy tattered shawls while she spoke.

"Why not return home again?"

"I shall, honoured sir, as soon as they have made it up to me for the loss of my man. Oh yes, I shall!—And may neither plague nor fire spare this miserable town of Lodz! May our Lord keep no evil away from it, and may all the dwellers therein perish to the very last!"

"Hush, hush," Charles said, slightly shocked; "ye have no cause for cursing."

"I—no cause?" she cried, astounded, raising to his her own tear-faded pale-blue eyes, staring out of her plain wan face, which poverty had worn to skin and bone. "What! honoured sir, we were in the country—only 'Komorniki,' * it is true, for my man had but three acres left to him; and as we had not the wherewithal to build a cabin, we lived at our cousins'. We worked for others indeed, but we had decent lodgings, we planted potatoes and kept geese—sometimes a pig—on our land. And we had eggs our fowls gave us, and a cow. And here—what? From day-break till nightfall my poor man was hard at work: yet we had not much to eat, and lived as live the lowest beggars—as dogs live!"

"But wherefore did ye come at all? Better had ye stayed in the country."

"Wherefore indeed?" she replied drearily. "Ah, do I know? Everybody came hither, and we did likewise. Adam had gone to Lodz one spring; leaving his wife, he had gone. And when harvest was over, he came back, but in such fine apparel that no one knew who he was. A silver watch he had, and a ring; and more money than he could have earned in the country by three years' work. We were amazed, and the man (a murrain on him!) told us lies. They had paid him to lure the people away from the country, to whom he promised God knows what. So two labourers went off with him at once; and afterwards all those who were able started for this town of Lodz. They were all hankering after grand attire and watches —and the deeds of the flesh. I would fain have kept my man at home, for why should we come to a strange place, and to people quite at the back of the world? Then he gave me a beating and went—and came back later to take me along with him. O Lord, O dear Lord!" she sobbed bitterly, wiping her tears away with unwashed hands. A fit of crying seized her and shook her body so that her little ones clutched at her dress, weeping in silence with her.

* *Komorniki*—peasant lodgers who have no house of their own, but must work for the lodgings they occupy.—*Translator's Note.*

"Well," said Charles, "here are five roubles. Take them and do as I have told you."

He turned on his heel and walked off: he had quite enough of this. Sentiment, tenderness—these were things he was training himself to dislike, and the dying embers of feeling, which he had set himself to quench, had been painfully stirred by that woman.

He stopped for a time in front of the Mather-Platt oxydizing apparatus, through which the goods already printed and dried had to pass; he gazed somewhat absently at the patterns newly formed, or rather developed by passing through the apparatus: yellow flowers, touched off with brown shades, came out in dark crimson tints under the influence of heat and complex aniline salts.

The afternoon recess now being over, the factory was once more full of busy life.

Charles looked out of his office window: the weather had suddenly grown lowering, and the snow that fell in thick flakes whitened the courtyard and walls. He saw Horn standing near the porter's lodge (where the only way of exit was to be found) and talking with the same woman he had been speaking to himself. She was thanking him very warmly for something that she put into her bosom.

"Mr. Horn!" he cried, putting his head out of the window.

"Ah! I was just coming to you," Horn replied, and he entered a minute later.

"That woman—what were you advising her to do?" Charles said rather sternly, looking out of the window.

The other hesitated for an instant; his face, comely as a maiden's, flushed scarlet, and there was a flash in his kindly blue eyes.

"I told her to see a lawyer and bring an action against the factory."

"And what business is it of yours?" Boroviecki asked, biting his lips and drumming on the window-pane.

"What business?" Horn repeated, and after a pause: "Misery or wrong of any sort is very much my——"

"And what are you here?" Charles cut in sharply, sitting down at his long table.

"I?" he answered, taken aback. "Why, you know very well, sir: an articled clerk in that office."

"Then, Mr. Horn, I'm much afraid you will not be that for long."

"Perhaps so; and if so, it's all the same to me," was the muttered reply.

"But not all the same to us—to the factory where you are one wheel among many thousands! We received you here that you might work, not play the philanthropist. Here, where everything requires the utmost regularity and order and harmony, you would simply become a disturbing influence."

"But I am a man, not a machine."

"At home you are. But at the factory no one will ask you about that, nor require proofs of your humanitarianism. In our factory," he went on, warming to his subject, "what we want is your brains, your muscles; and we pay you for them —and for nothing else. Here you are but a machine, just like the rest of us; you have to do nothing but what belongs to your own sphere. This is no nursery-ground for budding angels; this——"

"Mr. Boroviecki!" the young man here broke in.

"Mr. Horn, listen to me when I speak to you!" Charles cried angrily, flinging a large album of samples down on the floor. "Bucholc has taken you on my recommendation. I know your family, and am your best friend; but I see what the matter with you is."

"Do you talk of common humanity as of an illness?"

"When you give such advice to all who have any claim on the factory, you place me in a false position.—It's the law you ought to have gone in for—a lawyer's business is to plead the cause of the unfortunate and the oppressed—and be well paid for it, of course," he added cynically; he could not remain angry for long with those gently pleading eyes looking into his.—"But enough of this," he continued. "A longer stay here will make you see things as they really are: you will

get to know all about those poor downtrodden people, and how they must be dealt with. And then, when you have taken up your father's business after him, you will confess how very right I was."

"No, Mr. Boroviecki," Horn replied; "I shall not stay here any longer, nor take up my father's business."

This was unexpected. "Then what do you intend to do?" Charles asked.

"I cannot say as yet. And this I tell you quite openly, in spite of the hard—the cruelly hard—things you said just now; for I know how impossible it is for you, the director of such big works as these, to say anything else."

"You mean to leave us, then; so much is clear to me. But why, I cannot tell."

Horn burst out: "Because, amongst this vile rabble of Lodz, I find life unbearable! Can't you understand me—you, who yourself belong to society?—Yes, because I loathe, and with all my soul, not only the factories, but the men—Bucholc, Rosenstein, and the rest of them—that infamous trading gang!"

"Ha ha! that's exquisite! What a daisy you are!—Really there is none like you, none!"

"I say no more," said Horn, extremely pained.

"Please yourself; the less nonsense you talk, the better."

"Then farewell!"

"Bye-bye! Ha ha! Oh, what a splendid actor you would make!"

"Mr. Boroviecki!" the other cried.

"Well?"

Horn bowed silently and went out. He could not find words.

"A first-class cry-baby!" Boroviecki muttered after him, and made for the drying-room, where he was at once plunged in a parching torrid atmosphere.

There stood great chests of iron plate, filled with heated and anhydrous air, working with a rumbling sound like far-off thunder, and pouring forth an endless succession of coloured stuffs, quite dry and stiff as buckram.

These stuffs, heaped up on the ground, on low stands, on tiny trucks moving noiselessly in and out, gleamed in the clear dry light of the room (that had great windows on every side), and appeared with dimmed tints of old gold, of violet-shaded purple, of ultramarine hues, and the hues of faded emeralds; all in piles, as it were of metal plates, dully bright, and vivid without lustre.

The workmen, who were only useful supplements to the machines, moved about silently in their shirt-sleeves, with bare feet and bleared eyes, fatigued by the never-ending riot of colours before them.

Sometimes one or another of them would gaze out of the windows at the outside world, seen from the height of the fourth floor—either at Lodz close beneath, seen through the mists and smoke-wreaths pierced by numberless chimneys, house roofs, and leafless trees; or beyond it at the fields, stretching away to the sky-line—greyish-white dingy spaces, flooded by the thaws of the coming spring, and sprinkled here and there with the brick-red of factory buildings, which in the distance took the livid tones of red flayed flesh; and farther still, at the tiny hamlets dotted about, that seemed crouching flat along the ground; or at the roads winding among the fields like ribbons of jet-black mud, and glittering athwart rows of skeleton poplars.

The dynamos rumbled on incessantly; incessantly, too, did the transmission belts buzz on, everything keeping time to the work done in those huge metal chests which, taking in the goods wet from the printing-room, disgorged them parched and dry. In that great rectangular chamber, full of wan colours and the wan light of a March day, and with wan men at work there, these drying-chests looked like weird shrines of some god of might who ruled there with supreme sway.

Charles's nerves were shaken, and it was with less attention than usual that he examined the stuffs to see whether any had been scorched or dried to excess.

"Foolish fellow!" he would say to himself, thinking of

young Horn; and again and again the noble-looking young man, with those clear blue eyes gazing at him with silent pain, disappointment, and reproach, would rise up in his memory, and he felt somehow vaguely distressed and uneasy. As he eyed the crowd of workers, certain things Horn had said came back to him.

"I too was like him once upon a time!" And his mind would fly back to old days; but he did not give way to those memories. His lips curled scornfully, and his eyes looked hard and cold.

"All that is over—quite over!" he thought, yet with a strange feeling that seemed almost like regret for old days—for the illusions that were not to return—for those noble impulses that Life had now swept away. Presently, however, this mood left him, and he was himself again: he was what he was—the manager of Herman Bucholc's printing-room, a chemical specialist, cool, hard-headed, caring for nobody, capable of anything—in short, as Moritz had called him, a typical man of Lodz.

In this mood, when passing through the calendering department, he was met by a workman.

"What is it you want?" he asked curtly, as he walked on.

"Pray, sir, Mr. Pufke, our foreman, tells us that from the first of April there will be fifteen fewer hands employed here."

"Right.—We shall have a new plant that requires so many men fewer to serve it."

The man stood, cap in hand, hardly knowing what to say, and fearing to say it; but, encouraged by the others who looked out at him from behind the machines and the piles of goods, he followed Charles, and said: "And what is to become of us then?"

"Look out for work to do elsewhere. Only those remain who have been with us a long time."

"Why, we have been here for three years!"

"I have no suggestion to make," Boroviecki answered dryly. "The new plant will work in your place and not re-

quire you. Still, something new may occur before the first. Perhaps we may enlarge our bleachery." And he went to the elevator, which at once took him out of sight.

The men looked at one another in silence and dismay, thinking of the morrow, a day of unemployment and of misery.

"Call these machines? They are curses—hell-hounds!" a man hissed, kicking at one of them with intense hatred.

"The goods are ready!" the foreman cried.

The man hurriedly donned his cap, and set to take the red flannelette out of the calender with the precision of an automaton.

CHAPTER III

THE restaurant of the Victoria Hotel was full of people.

Several large rooms, with low ceilings in stucco painted to imitate wood, were filled with noise and uproar.

The brass bars which protected the glazed entrance doors resounded continually as these swung open to let in a customer, who disappeared at once in the throng and the smoke-mist that the restaurant was full of. The electric lights in the great bar-saloon throbbed and winked every now and then; the gas-burners that were flaming at the same time cast a flickering nebulous light over the people who sat in crowds at the many tables adorned with white napery.

"Waiter, the bill!"

"Some beer!"

"Waiter, beer!"

Such were the calls that rang through the rooms, together with the dull drumming of tankards pounding on the tables.

The waiters, in evening coats sorely stained with grease, and wielding napkins as dirty as dish-clouts, were rushing about in every direction, and their soiled shirt-fronts flashed past the heads of the beer-drinkers.

More and more guests came in, the hubbub grew more deafening, and cries of: *"Lodzer Zeitung!"* and *"Kurjer Codzienny!"* pierced the air, as the news-boys pushed on amongst the chairs.

"Here, you! the *Lodzer Zeitung!*" Moritz shouted.

He looked through the paper, often glancing impatiently at the door; he was expecting Charles. At last he got up,

having caught sight of a familiar face in the next room.

"You, Leo! when did you arrive?"

"This very morning."

"How have you been getting on this season?" Moritz asked, taking a seat by his side on a green-upholstered sofa.

"Splendidly!" Leo exclaimed, stretching out his feet on a chair, and unbuttoning his waistcoat.

"I was thinking of you this very day, and talking of you to Boroviecki last evening."

"To Boroviecki, Bucholc's manager?"

"The same."

"Still printing those cotton stuffs? I heard he meant starting something of his own."

"That's just why we came to talk of you."

"Oh! Is it wool?"

"No, cotton."

"Only?"

"At present there's no saying."

"Money at hand?"

"There will be. Meanwhile there's credit, which is better."

"Is he your partner?"

"Yes, with Max Baum; do you know him?"

"Oh dear! there's something wrong here.—I mean Boroviecki," he added after a pause.

"But why?"

"The man's a 'Polachok,' " said Leo, using a Russian nickname for a Pole; and he stretched himself out at full length over sofa and chair.

Moritz laughed at him. "You don't know the man a bit. Everybody in Lodz will soon be talking about him. I believe in him as in myself: he'll make a great fortune."

"And Baum: what of him?"

"He's an ox. Requires to sleep and talk his fill, and get his work to do; but he's not a fool at all. You too might help us a good deal, and gain not a little besides. Krongold has already offered to deal with us."

"Go to Krongold, he's a big fish. Knows no end of petty traders, who buy stuffs of him—each for a hundred roubles

a year. Yes, he's a big traveller, known from Kutno to Skiernievice.—Do business with him by all means. I don't care to interfere, I have something to sell already. Why, I've by me a letter from Bucholc, who wants me as his agent for all the East! And the terms he offers—what terms!" Here he hastily began to look through every pocket for the letter in question.

"I know, I know," Moritz answered; "yesterday Boroviecki was telling me how he had recommended you to Bucholc."

"Boroviecki, indeed? What did he do that for?"

"Because he is a shrewd man who thinks of the future."

"Is that so?—Well, I think he might get a good deal by starting the business. I would willingly put twenty thousand into it on the spot.—How much money has he? for I really know nothing about him, so to speak."

"He will tell you himself how much he has. I can only say that he is not going to accept ready money."

"A Polish noble!" Leo murmured in scornful pity, expectorating into the middle of the room.

"Not at all. He is simply a better business man than any agent or traveller in all east Europe," Moritz answered, tapping his tankard with his knife. "Have you sold very much?" he went on.

"Some thousands of roubles' worth: over ten thousand in cash, the rest in bills of exchange of the very best—payable in four months, signature Safonoff. First-class business," and he patted Moritz on the knee, with joy at the very thought of it.

"And I too have an order for you. See what a friend I am?"

"To what amount?"

"Three thousand roubles in all."

"Long credit or short? Bill of exchange or C.O.D.?"

"C.O.D. I'll hand it over at once," said Moritz; and he set to look through a very large pocket-book with a lock to it.

"How much for yourself?" Leo asked.

"If cash down, one per cent will do; as between friends."

"Got payments to make; short of cash just now; will pay up in a week."

"All right, here's the order.—Ah, excuse me, I'm back at once," Moritz cried, starting up and going towards a thickset German who had just come in and was looking round the room.

"Good day, Herr Müller!"

"Good day, how are you?" the other returned absently, still gazing round him.

"If you are looking for anyone, I might be of use," Moritz continued, bent on forcing himself upon the new-comer.

"I'm looking for Mr. Boroviecki. I came in here for no one else."

"Oh, he'll be here presently: I'm expecting him myself. Please be seated here.—This is my good acquaintance, Leo Cohn"; and he introduced him.

"I am Müller!" the other remarked, rather haughtily, but sitting down.

"Is there a child in all Lodz that does not know your name?" Leo said hastily, buttoning himself up in a great hurry, and making room for Müller on the sofa.

Müller smiled condescendingly, and glanced towards the door. Boroviecki was just coming in, and not alone; but on seeing him, the "Cotton King," he left his companions at the door, and advanced, hat in hand, all the crowd in the restaurant looking on the while and watching the man with mingled dislike, envy, and admiration.

"Why, I almost had to wait for you!" Müller observed. "We must have a business talk together."

With a nod to Moritz and Leo, and a smile to the men crowding on all sides, he put his arm, German fashion, round Charles's waist, and walked out.

"I phoned to your factory, but was told you had left earlier than usual this evening."

"Very sorry indeed," Boroviecki answered politely.

"I even wrote to you myself," Müller added in a louder key and with great self-assurance, though it was a known fact

to all the town that he could hardly write his own name.

"I have not been home yet, so I could not get your letter, sir."

"I wrote about what I gave you a hint of already, Mr. Boroviecki; I am a plain man, and tell you again simply: come over to me, and you shall have two thousand more pay."

"Bucholc," Charles returned coolly, "if I stay with him, is ready to pay me as much as you."

"But I'll give you three—no, four thousand more! Four thousand roubles: do you hear? A pretty good salary: fourteen thousand a year!"

"Your proposal, sir, is magnificent, and I am truly grateful, but unable to accept it."

"Then you are staying with Bucholc?"

"I am not. To speak quite frankly, I neither accept your offer nor stay with Bucholc, because I am starting a factory myself."

Müller stopped short, drew back a step, looked Charles in the face, and asked in a lower and more respectful tone: "Is it wool?"

"I can only tell you, sir, that there will not be any sort of competition between us."

"Oh, I don't trouble about competition in the least!" Müller exclaimed, slapping his pocket. "How can you or anybody harm me? With my millions taking my part?"

Boroviecki was silent, smiling to himself with a far-away look.

"Well, what sort of goods are you to go in for?" Müller again inquired, putting his arm round Charles's waist.

They were thus walking together along the well-worn alsphalt-paved side-way, and passing through the courtyard of a hotel to a theatre built at the very end of it and lit up by a great electric sign.

People were going in in large numbers. The coaches and carriages had pulled up outside the hotel, letting out men of rotund proportions for the most part, and overdressed,

heavily cloaked women, walking over the wet pavement with open umbrellas; for though the rain had ceased, a thick, clammy drizzle still came down.

"I like you, Mr. Boroviecki," Müller said without waiting for his former question to be answered; "so much that, as soon as ever the smash comes, you will find a situation with me, and some thousand roubles of salary."

"So you'd pay me better now than then?"

"I should. You're worth more to me now, you see."

"Many thanks for your plain speaking," Charles replied, sarcastically.

"I had no intention to offend you; but I always say what I think," said Müller, who had noticed the other's somewhat bitter smile, and was eager to set himself right.

"You do.—Well, if I come to a smash once, that will only teach me how not to do so again."

"Mr. Boroviecki, you have a good head on your shoulders, and I like you amazingly. Together we might do splendid things."

"Ah well, we shall have to do them apart," Charles said with a smile, making a low bow to some ladies who passed by.

"Polish girls?" Müller queried. "They are pretty; but so is my Mada too."

"She is—very," Charles replied, with a serious glance at him.

"Ah!—an idea strikes me—— But you shall know it another time," Müller said with an air of mystery.—"Have you a ticket for the play?"

"I have—sent me a fortnight ago."

"There will be only three people in my box."

"Any ladies?"

"They went in before me; I stayed to see you, but you disappointed me. So long! But I say, you'll come round to us, won't you?"

"To be sure; and a very pleasant duty it will be."

Müller went in, and Charles returned to the restaurant. Moritz had left, but told a waiter to say he would meet him at the theatre. Charles went there, to find himself in the

first row of orchestra seats, seated between Moritz and Leo. The latter was assiduously bowing to a certain fair-haired damsel on the first floor, and staring at her through an opera-glass.

"A beauty of the first water she is, this golden girl of mine. Just look at her, Moritz!"

"Are you intimate with her?"

"Am I intimate? Ha ha! Oh yes, very much so indeed!—Just introduce me to Boroviecki, will you?"

This Moritz at once did. Leo was about to make some remark, and had already begun with his usual gesture—slapping Moritz on the knee—when Boroviecki stood up, facing the audience that completely filled the theatre and formed the very best public in all Lodz; and he proceeded to survey it carefully, often saluting the occupiers of a box or a stall with a wonderfully graceful bend of the head.

Very tranquilly, too, did he stand the fire of binocles and opera-glasses directed on him from every part of the theatre, which hummed like a beehive filled with a fresh swarm. His tall, lithe, and well-developed figure stood out to perfection from where he stood. His handsome face and characteristically delicate features, adorned with a fine well-trimmed moustache, and set off by a firm, strongly marked lower jaw, together with the careless ease of all his motions and glances, denoted him as a typical "gentleman." Who could possibly, seeing his fashionable exterior, have guessed him to be a man unrivalled in his specialty, as a first-class manufacturing chemist and connoisseur in colouring matters; one whom all the cotton factories were struggling to get hold of; one who in his department had really made revolutions? In the expression of the man's bluish-grey eyes, of his sharply cut lineaments, of his strongly chiselled forehead, there seemed to be something of a bird or beast of prey. Indomitable inexorable will breathed from out every inch of him.

Somewhat haughtily he let his eyes wander over the brilliantly illuminated theatre, and the gaily attired public that thronged it, sparkling with jewels and diamonds. The boxes looked like balconies covered with cherry-coloured velvet,

from which (so many flowers, as it were) there looked out ladies splendidly attired and blazing with precious gems.

"Charles!" Moritz whispered low; "how many millions, think you, are in this theatre to-night?"

"Two hundred or so," was the whispered reply, as Boroviecki looked round upon those well-known faces—all millionaires!

"In here there is an aroma of millions," Leo put in, who was inhaling the air, redolent with perfumes, with the scent of fresh flowers—and of the mud brought in from the street.

"An aroma? Rather a stench of onions and the smell of potatoes," Boroviecki muttered disparagingly, whilst bowing with a pleasant smile to an extremely good-looking Jewess in a low-cut black silk dress that set off the dazzling whiteness of her dainty shoulders and of her neck, on which a necklace of brilliants was sparkling. Brilliants, too, gleamed above her brow, in the combs that kept in order her thick, black, soft hair, dressed Empire fashion, and in her ears, from which were suspended diamonds of unusual size; brilliants shone in her corsage, in the clasp of her waist-belt, and in the bracelets on her arms, sheathed in long, black gloves. Her eyes—long, large ovals between their lids—glowed like sapphires of the deepest violet-blue. Her face was of a warm olive hue, not without tints of dark red; she had a low forehead, strongly marked eyebrows, a classic nose, and rather full, large lips.

She gazed persistently at Boroviecki, heedless of the many people whose glasses were levelled at her on all sides; but from time to time she cast a seemingly inadvertent look at her husband, who sat a little behind her: an old man of a strongly pronounced Semitic type, whose head, heavy with his thoughts, was drooping over his chest, but who now and again would wake up a little, and darting a keen glance round at the audience, draw his waistcoat down over a protuberant paunch, and say in a whisper: "Lucy, why are you leaning forwards so?"

But she would feign not to have heard him, and continue surveying boxes and seats, all chock-full of people, mostly

of a German or Semitic type; or else stare at Charles, who must have noticed her interest, since he frequently turned towards her; yet he remained outwardly cold and indifferent.

"That wife of Zuker's—— A pretty piece of goods, isn't she?" Leo said *sotto voce* to Boroviecki, with whom he wanted to strike up a conversation, to worm out of the man some more particulars concerning the agency offered to him.

"Oh, do you think so?" replied the other frigidly.

"I think so, because I have eyes. Look at her figure: that's what I care for in a woman. Oh, she has a first-class *gorge*, soft as velvet—— Ha ha ha!"

"What are you laughing at?" Moritz inquired.

"I have just made a most excellent joke." And he told it over again, with another guffaw.

Silence followed, for the curtain had risen, and the eyes of all the spectators were now fixed on the stage, with the exception of Zuker's wife, who continued to gaze at Boroviecki from behind her fan, though he seemed to be taking no notice of her. She was evidently annoyed at this, for she more than once shut her fan and impatiently struck the top of the box-front with it.

He, after a faint smile and a momentary look in her direction, proceeded to give the whole of his attention to the stage, whereon a lot of male and female amateurs were giving parodies of real dramatic art.

It was indeed nothing but a mere charity performance, consisting of the efforts of two comic actresses, one solo singer, a piano-player, and a violinist, and some *tableaux vivants* to wind up with.

During an interlude Boroviecki got up, intending to go round to the Müllers. Cohn sought to detain him.

"Mr. Boroviecki, I want to have a talk with you. . . . Oh! What a very great man! 'No time now!' "

"He's quite right. This is not the place for business."

"Moritz, are you going quite silly? How can you? There's always time for business. Only your Boroviecki, Grand Duke of Bucholc and Company—he's too grand a fellow for us!"

Charles had meanwhile entered Müller's box. Müller went out to make more room for him; a short fat German was occupying the fourth seat.

Charles saluted Mrs. Müller, who was dozing in a corner, and bowed to her daughter, who had risen as soon as he entered.

"Störch."

"Boroviecki."

The interchange of names was followed by a handshake.

Charles took a seat.

"How do you like the play, Miss Müller?"

"Oh, very much—perfectly," she cried. Her round rosy face, not unlike a young radish newly washed, turned a deeper red, which her bright-green dress made still redder.

Ashamed of her blushes, she covered her face with a handkerchief to hide them.

Her mother, to protect her from a draught (the theatre doorway stood open), threw a tissue of priceless lace over the girl's shoulders, and then went back to her seat and dozed again.

"And you?" Miss Müller asked after a while, raising her eyes, which exactly resembled blue chinaware, and had a fringe of golden lashes. With her childlike lips, slightly parted, and her tiny face raised to his, she somehow put him in mind of a roll freshly baked!

"Well, I can say the same as you. Perfectly—very much! or else very much—perfectly."

"They play beautifully, don't they?"

"Yes—for amateurs.—I expected you would have been among them."

"I should have liked to, very much; but I was not asked," she replied, with a note of deep regret in her voice.

"They intended doing so, but were afraid of being refused; besides, it's as hard to get into your house as into the court of a king."

Here Störch put in: "Ya, ya! I said the same to Miss Mada."

"Then you might have let me know, since you are on visiting terms with us."

"I was busy and forgot," was the outspoken excuse.

To this there was no reply.

Störch coughed and leant forward to make some observation, but withheld it, seeing Boroviecki's eyes wandering about the theatre with a bored expression. As for Mada, she felt embarrassed. She wished exceedingly to talk; and now, when he sat by her side, and opera-glasses were levelled at them both from every box with special interest, she had no word to say! At last she tried.

"Are you not to belong to our firm?"

"Unfortunately, no; I have had to decline your father's offer."

"Oh! And Papa made so sure of you."

"I am exceedingly sorry."

"I hoped you would be at our house on Thursday; I wanted to beg you to do me a favour."

"Perhaps it could be managed, if you would tell me now."

He bent his head down to her, whilst looking hard at the Zukers' family box.

Lucy was fanning herself excitedly, and evidently in hot discussion behind her fan with her husband, who now and again pulled down his waistcoat and sat bolt upright.

"I wanted," said Mada, "to get from you a list of Polish books to read. I asked Papa, but he said I was silly, and ought to mind the house and take up housekeeping."

"Ya, ya, so he did," Störch once more put in; but he drew back before Boroviecki's look, fixed upon him.

"And why do you wish to read Polish? What do you want this list for?" Charles inquired rather curtly.

But she answered, with sudden boldness: "Because I do; I wish it, and am asking to be informed."

"But your brother must surely have a library in your new mansion?"

She shook with hearty but suppressed laughter.

"Why do you laugh at my supposition, please?"

"Why, because Wilhelm has such a dislike for books! One day he quarrelled with me about them and burnt all mine while I was in town with Mamma."

"Ya, ya! Wilhelm likes no books; Wilhelm—good lad!"

Boroviecki surveyed Störch coldly, then said to Mada: "Good. You shall have a list of the titles to-morrow."

"And suppose I wanted it right now?"

"Right now I can give you only some titles; you will get the rest to-morrow."

"Oh, how kind you are!" she said in great joy, but blushed like a peony, perceiving the ironical smile that curled his lips.

Having written a few titles on his card, embellished with his coat of arms, he bowed and went out.

In the passage he met with old Shaya Mendelsohn, a real "Cotton King," who was usually called Shaya simply.

This was a tall, raw-boned Hebrew, white-bearded like a patriarch, and clad in a long, common gaberdine that swept his heels.

The man was always wherever he supposed Herman Bucholc to be—Bucholc, his greatest rival in the realm of cotton, the biggest manufacturer in all Lodz, and his personal enemy into the bargain.

He stood in Boroviecki's way. Charles raised his hat and would have passed on; but Shaya accosted him.

"Greetings!—Herman is not here to-night: wherefore?" he inquired in most fearful Polish.

"Don't know," Charles said laconically. He could not bear the man.

"Farewell!" the other returned contemptuously.

Without answering at all, Charles made his way to a box on the first floor, where quite a bevy of ladies were assembled, with Moritz and Horn in their midst. There was very little room in the box, but merriment in plenty.

"Our little girl plays splendidly, doesn't she, Mr. Boroviecki?"

"Indeed she does. What a pity I have not brought a nosegay for her!"

"We have one ready; she will get it when the second piece is over."

"I see, ladies, you are merry enough—and crowded enough—without my help: so I'm off."

"Stay, stay; we shall be all the merrier," pleaded one of them, in a pale gown, with a pale face, and pale-blue eyes.

"Not merrier, surely," Moritz exclaimed, "but surely more crowded."

"I accordingly withdraw to leave you less so."

"If I might accompany you to Müller's box, I should go too."

"That I can manage for you."

Horn then said his word. "But I am going too; so you will have more room directly." He did not, though; a pleading look from a maiden in a front seat persuaded him to stay on.

"Do you know, Miss Mary," someone asked, "how much that Müller girl is worth? Why, fifty thousand roubles a year!"

"That *is* going strong," Moritz remarked. "To my mind, she's a business certainly worth having and holding."

"Come closer, Mr. Boroviecki, and I'll tell you something," the pale lady said in an undertone, bending her head so low that her dark silky hair brushed Charles's hair as he turned round to her. Screening herself with her fan, she whispered to him for some time.

"No plotting here!" a lady called out to them, the oldest person in the box, who ruled there supreme; a woman with something bizarre in her appearance, something "baroque style"—beautiful, forty-odd, with a dazzling complexion, hair quite grey, though uncommonly luxuriant, jet-black eyes, eyebrows ditto, and a dignified, commanding mien.

"Mrs. Stephanie was only relating a few interesting particulars about the new baroness."

"But such as she would hardly tell in public," the baroque lady observed.

"Oh see! Miss Mada Müller is condescending to look upon us!"

"To-night she is for all the world like a fat gosling, plucked, and garnished with parsley sprigs."

"To-night," Horn muttered, "Mme Stephanie is trying to be malicious."

"Or see that Shaya girl now, with a whole shop-window-ful of jewellery on her."

"Yes, but then she could well afford to sport two whole shop-windows!" Moritz struck in, fixing his glasses on his nose, and looking down to the Mendelsohns' box, where the youngest daughter, arrayed with the utmost magnificence, sat with her father and another girl.

"That—that lame creature—who is she?"

"The red-haired one do you mean? She is Rose."

"She was in a shop with me yesterday, turning everything topsyturvy, and buying nothing at all. So she went off, but I had a good look at her; she's a fright."

"She's lovely, she's an angel.—What? an angel? No—four—no, fifteen angels put together!" Moritz bawled, mimicking old Shaya.

"Then good-night, ladies," Charles said. "Come, Moritz, and leave Horn to the smiles of the fair."

"Won't you come over to take tea with us, after the performance?"

"Many thanks, but that must be to-morrow night; to-night I cannot."

"What, must you dance attendance at the Müllers'?" the pale Stephanie queried, not without a shade of tartness.

"At the Grand Hotel. It is Saturday, and Kurovski is to meet me as usual. We must confer together on matters of the highest importance."

"Settle them here, then; he is surely here."

"Why, don't you know that the man never enters a theatre?"

So he bowed and withdrew, followed to the door by an enigmatical glance from Mrs. Stephanie.

The curtain had risen some time since, so he went back to

his seat. But there was no listening to the play: mysterious whispers were circulating all around him.

Everyone had been struck to see that Knoll, the son-in-law of Bucholc, who had sat alone in his box, had been sent for during the performance, and that a little later Grosglik, the biggest banker in Lodz, had slipped quietly out of the theatre. He had got a wire, and was hurrying off to Shaya.

These whispered details passed quick as lightning from mouth to mouth, filling the directors of many a firm with a feeling of vague unaccountable disquietude. All wondered what the matter could be, but as yet no one knew.

The women indeed attended to the performance; but the men for the most part, whether in boxes or in the pit, turned uneasy eyes towards the king and the kinglets of Lodz. Mendelsohn was sitting crouched forwards, spectacles on forehead, now and then stroking his snowy beard with a splendid gesture, and apparently absorbed in the play that was going on. Knoll, the omnipotent Knoll, Bucholc's son and his successor, also listened most attentively. And Müller too could certainly have heard of nothing, for he was roaring with laughter at the actors' jokes, so boisterously that Mada occasionally ventured a faint remonstrance.

"Papa—so loud!—You mustn't."

"I've paid for my fun, and I'll have it!" he would retort; and in truth he enjoyed himself immensely.

Zuker had disappeared; Lucy sat solitary in the box, with her eyes once more fixed upon Charles.

The lesser potentates and the representatives of such firms as Ende-Grenspan, Wolkman, Bauvecel, Fitze, Biberstein, Pinchovsky, Prusak, and Stojovsky, were fidgeting about in their places, ever more and more restless; and as fresh waves of whispered news came rolling in over the theatre, one or another of them would go out and not come back.

Scrutinizing eyes were looking everywhere; questions passed from man to man; the sense of disquietude grew more and more strong. Though everybody felt sure that something important had taken place, no one could tell why he was sure.

Slowly this uneasy feeling spread even to those who could fear no bad news. They, like the others, felt that warning seismic thrill under Lodz, subsequently—and so often of late! —visited by a cataclysm.

Only in the high places—the cheap ones—nothing wrong was noticed; there the fun and merriment was as great as ever; there vociferous laughter was still heard, and loud applause, and noisy cheers filled the air. The jovial uproar, pouring from those upper tiers, fell in sounding cascades down to the pit and boxes, and upon the heads and into the minds of the men so unexpectedly troubled—upon those man-millions who lolled there, stretched out on velvet, bedecked with diamonds, puffed up with grandeur and with power.

"It's the cotton men that are hit!" Leo observed to Boroviecki. "See there: the wool-traders and the rest of them are at ease, so to speak; only rather curious. Oh, I know all about that!"

"Frumkin of Bialystok, Lihacheff of Rostoff, Alpasoff of Odessa—all smashed!" So said Moritz, who had gleaned the information somewhere or other.

"How much does Lodz stand to lose?" Charles asked.

Moritz slipped out, to return in a few minutes, much paler than before, his features strangely distorted, his eyes glittering strangely; he was so much moved that he could not keep his glasses on, do what he would.

"One more: Rogopulo of Odessa.—All those firms as solid as stone walls!"

"Is the loss very great?"

"Lodz is in for two millions!" he said in deep concern, while striving to fix his glasses on his nose.

"This cannot be!" Boroviecki cried, almost shouted, and he started to his feet; at which the public behind him proceeded to thump the floor and to hiss, as they could not see the stage for him.

"But who has told you this?"

"Landau. When Landau speaks, Landau knows."

"And who are the losers?"

"Pretty nearly all of us; but Kessler, Bucholc, and Müller are hardest hit."

"But why has no one intervened? Why has this crash not been prevented?"

"Rogopulo has absconded; Lihacheff is dead: in despair—took poison."

"What of Frumkin and Alpasoff?"

"Don't know. Can only tell you what has been wired."

By this time the news had spread throughout the audience, and everybody now knew of the disaster. Every instant the emotion produced by the tidings was manifest here and there like the explosion of a bomb. There were faces raised to heaven, eyes that sparkled, harsh words that flew about in the air, chairs lifted up and brought down again with a crash; men, too, rushing away in hot haste to wire or phone. And soon the theatre was far from full.

Boroviecki felt greatly upset by this news. Though he lost nothing, yet those around him had lost.

"And your firm?" he inquired of Max Baum, who had caught sight of an empty stall, and sat down by Charles. "Do you lose nothing?"

"There is nothing that we can lose—except honour; and that kind of property is not on the market in Lodz," Max replied satirically.

Around them the people who thronged the place were talking eagerly.

"Lodz is in hot water now!"

"A season of *burning* heat will follow."

"And the fire brigade will be hard at work!"

"Well, warm weather means that spring is at hand."

"You may laugh your fill: laughter costs nothing."

"The way of the world! Half of us get their necks wrung, the rest fill their pockets."

"Who comes best out of it?"

"Why, Bucholc, Kessler, and Müller."

"Those men, come what may, are never down."

"Devil take the fellows! what good is it to me—and what harm—whether they keep their money or lose it?"

Thus questions and remarks were bandied about, with sneering jests, statements of figures, conjectures, and looks that seemed to gloat over the ruin of others.

"Mayer's liabilities, I hear, amount to not less than a hundred thousand roubles."

"Good for him: when he has sold his horses and must go on foot, his belly will shrink a bit, and he'll not need a Marienbad cure."

"Lots of family jewels will be sold cheap now."

"This will finish Wolkman off: for some time he has gone only half-speed."

"Now, Robert, ask for his daughter's hand; you'll not be turned down."

"Let her wait!"

Such was the talk of the mob: but the "kings" sat on, serene and unruffled.

Shaya never took his eyes off the singer. When she had done, he was the first to clap his hands. Then he said a word in Rose's ear, with an imperceptible sign towards Knoll, who, leaning forwards from his box, was nodding towards Boroviecki.

As soon as the interlude began, Charles went round to him.

"Have you heard?"

"I have." And he proceeded to name firm after firm.

"That's of no account."

"Of no account? Why, Lodz alone has to pay two millions."

"Of no account to *us*. Bauer was round here but now: he says it comes to no more than fifteen thousand."

"To half a million, from what folk say."

"That's the amount of Shaya's loss—and he says it's ours!"

"At any rate, Lodz will have to suffer awfully; firms will be bursting like bubbles."

"Let them burst! To us it matters nothing," he drawled carelessly, eyeing his exquisitely manicured hands, and contemplating semi-consciously and with half-closed eyelids the scintillating brilliants set in a ring on his left hand.

"I tell you this, not as to an employee, but as to a friend. —Do you know of anyone whom this crash is sure to ruin?"

"Scarcely anyone has been named positively."

"It does not matter; plenty will have to go; to-morrow we shall know who they are.—A merry Sunday to them!"

"This is a great disaster."

"For our firm, no. Think on whom the blow falls: on the cotton-dealers. Now, who can resist the blow? Only we, Shaya, and a few more. All our shoddy competitors, half ruined already, will presently be quite so; they have destroyed each other. So we shall for a while be more at ease. We shall make some of those new goods which they made formerly, and as a consequence sell as much more.—But all that is no concern of ours. If they go under, let them; if they resort to arson, they may; if they take to swindling, swindling let it be. We shall stand firm. It is of slight moment; there are things of much more import. You will see soon —oh, very, very soon—that half of the cotton works must come to a standstill."

Boroviecki looked at him, while listening—not very patiently, indeed. He disliked Knoll for the man's inordinate pride, bred in him by the millions he possessed.

He had come in for most of his father-in-law's property, was the best-educated man in the whole set of money-makers, well-bred and of pleasant intercourse; but also the most inexorable and the most grasping of men, using without mercy all the people and all the influence within his power.

"Come and dine with us to-morrow," he said; "I invite you for father's name-day.—Now please tell me the time. I can't look at my watch, or people would think me in a hurry to be off."

"Eleven in a few minutes."

"When does the express train leave for Warsaw?"

"At half past twelve."

"Then there's still time. I must now tell you why all these tidings about failures, about Lodz losing two millions, and so on, matter so little to me. The fact is that news of far

more importance has come in.—I am aware that I am speaking to a gentleman?"

"I suppose you are, but fail to see the connexion——"

"You shall directly. You are a friend of ours, and we shall never forget what we owe to you in the printing department. Let me tell you that we got news from Petersburg about some business of very great moment, only an hour ago: business such that—that I must go there instantly, and absolutely in secret."

He had concluded hurriedly, without telling Charles what he had intended to say. This reticence arose from a look of cold distrust in Boroviecki's eyes, that penetrated to his very soul. He moved uneasily in his place, and threw a glance at the opposite box.

"That wife of Zuker's is a handsome woman," he remarked.

"Her diamonds are handsome," was the answer.

"So you'll go to old Bucholc's to-morrow?"

"Oh, without fail."

"He's got something special to talk over with you.—Well, good-bye. See you again in a few days.—But not a word of this, Mr. Boroviecki."

"Not one syllable."

Charles withdrew with a sense of disappointment. Knoll had most certainly not told him all.

"What can that news be? Why must he go? What is it he has concealed from me, and why?" He wondered, but to no purpose, and lost himself in a maze of guesses and surmises.

He left before the curtain went down, but when outside, turned back and made for Mrs. Zuker's box.

"I thought you had forgotten me," she said reproachfully, fixing her wonderful eyes full upon him.

"Is such a thing possible?"

"With you, everything is possible."

"You judge me by what my enemies—and friends—say."

"No matter what they say; I saw you go."

"But I returned, I was forced to return."

"To the theatre? Ah, I see: you had forgotten something."

"To you, madam."

"Did you?" she asked slowly, her eyes ablaze with pleasure. "Never yet did you say such a thing to me."

"But this many a month I have longed to."

Her gaze was like a kiss upon his face, and he seemed to feel her warm breath on his lips.

"You were talking of me down there in the stalls with Mr. Welt. Yes, I know you were."

"We were talking about your jewels."

"No one in Lodz has anything like such beauties, eh?"

"No one but Mrs. Knoll and the Baroness," he returned, with a malicious smile.

"And what else did you talk about?"

"About your beauty, madam."

"Now you are laughing at me."

"I cannot laugh at what I love," he said in a stifled voice, taking hold of her hand, that hung down. She drew it back at once, looking at him with dilated eyes, then round her as if all the audience had heard.

"Good-bye, madam," he continued, rising; angry with himself, sure that he had made a blunder, and unable to explain how he could have brought matters so quickly to a point without any preliminaries, unless by the fact that she had intoxicated him.

"No. We shall go together, and at once," she said quickly. Putting on her scarf, and taking up her fan and her box of sweets, she walked out.

In the cloak-room she put her things on without a word. Boroviecki was also quite speechless—unable to find aught to say. He could only take note of those eyes of hers, with their ever-varying expression; of her neck and shoulders, so exquisitely shaped; of those lips, over which her tongue would pass again and yet again; and of her figure, a bright dream of perfection.

She put her hat on, and he wrapped her cloak about her. As she bent somewhat back to fold herself in it, her hair at that moment touched his lips. He recoiled slightly, as from a flame, and left her unsupported, so that she fell on

to his bosom with her back turned. He instantly seized her in his arms, and pressed his lips to the nape of her neck, which stiffened and writhed under that devouring kiss.

Uttering a faint cry, she for an instant leaned upon him with such force that he tottered beneath her weight. The next, she freed herself from his embrace. Pale as marble, she gasped for breath; her eyes blazed under half-closed lids.

"Take me to my carriage," she said to Charles, looking away.

"To the very end of the world, if you will."

"Button my gloves."

He did so, but could hardly find either buttonholes or buttons, and was still less able to catch her eyes, purposely turned from him. One of her shoulders was pressed close to the wall; her head was averted. She stood thus, her hand in his, her bright crimson lips curved in an odd smile, and a shudder now and then passing through her frame. At such moments, she would press closer to the wall, while something like a shadow of dread crept over her face, and twitched the corners of her mouth.

"Come then," he whispered, as soon as her gloves were buttoned.

He led her to the carriage, and taking her hand, kissed it passionately, with these words: "Forgive me, madam! By all that's sacred, I implore you."

She made no answer, but instead pulled him into the carriage with such strength that he stumbled in unconsciously, slamming the door behind him.

The horses started off at a quick trot.

Boroviecki was wrought up to the highest pitch by all this. He had no time at all for reflection, nor indeed was he able at that moment to think of anything but the fact of her being at his side. She, however, sat at a distance, huddled up in a corner; he could only hear the quick intakes of her agitated breathing; or sometimes, as a lamp-post swept by, he caught a glimpse of her face and of those great luminous eyes of hers, staring into vacancy.

He strove to be master of himself. He wanted to stop the coachman; his hands mechanically sought the handle of the door, to open it and jump out into the street. But he could not: he no longer had either the will or the power.

She sat mute, closely wrapped up in her long mantle, as if seeking to keep herself apart from him—or perhaps to resist a mad desire to leap into his arms?

"Will you forgive me?" he said once more, lowering his voice, creeping closer to her, and trembling all over. She made no answer. Then he whispered low, as if from the depths of his being: "O Lucy! Lucy!"

A shudder went through all her body, she shook the mantle from her shoulders, and with a low cry flung herself trembling upon his bosom.

"I love, I love you!" she moaned, embracing him with the utmost intensity of passion.

Their lips met in a long, long kiss, as strong as death.

"I love, I love you!" she repeated, delightedly reiterating the honey-sweet words, as she kissed his face in triumphant rapture. "No, say nothing more now—I want to speak—to cry out for ever: 'I love you!'—I'd repeat the words in the face of the whole world!—I know that others love you too—I know you are betrothed.—What's that to me?—I love you!—Not that you may love me back again—that I may be happy in your love; not for that!—I love you—and nothing more.—If you wish it, I'll kneel at your feet—and repeat it from my heart till you believe me and begin to love me in your turn—I cannot pretend any longer; I cannot live any longer without love—and without you to love!—You are my only one, my lord; and you I love!"

The words came welling up fast, wildly, incoherently, as she now flung her cloak aside, and now wrapped it around her, now drawing away from him, and then once more, silent but radiant, embracing and hugging him hard, with kiss upon kiss.

Boroviecki, swept off his feet by such a frenzied outbreak of passion, and enthralled by the intense fiery love thrill-

ing in her voice and burning in her hot kisses, was vanquished by his feelings and as much beside himself as she was.

Her kisses were returned with such ardour that she more than once lay swooning in his embrace.

"I love you, Lucy! Oh, how I love you!"

"No words—kisses only!" she would then cry out in ecstasy.

Her voice, at times swelling and bursting forth tempestuously, and then subsiding into sobs, sounded full of the tenderness of the enamoured Orient, and melodious as an inspired canticle of love.

"Oh, how I have dreamed of this moment! for how many months have I longed for you! For how many years have I waited—waited in sorrow! Oh, kiss me—kiss me with all your might and main!—Ah!" she cried wildly, "I'd willingly die this very instant!"

The carriage rolled on, wending its way along one of the unpaved streets of the town, horribly deep in mud. There was in all the street not so much as one lamp; only the carriage lanterns moved their circles of golden light over the mobile layers of deep liquid mire, spirting up even on to the carriage window-panes.

No one was walking or driving on the road, bordered on either side by high garden walls, beyond which rose huge piles of timber, standing four-square, or the tall chimney of some factory, of which there was no lack in that quarter. The large dogs that guarded the warehouses barked furiously at the carriage as it passed by; they were heard dashing in their rage against the gates, and scrabbling at the fences that would not let them out into the street.

But they in the carriage saw nothing, heard nothing, engulfed as they were by the unexpected billow which had carried them away and made them blind to all things.

"Lucy?"

"Kiss me!"

"Dost love?"

"Kiss me!"

And no words but such as these burst from their hearts, now brimming with white-hot lava.

"Oh, take me, Charles! let me be yours entirely and for ever!"

Even when they arrived, they could not realize that they were there.

Zuker's mansion stood close to a grove that belonged to the town.

"Come in—come to me," she murmured, holding him fast by the hand.

Instinctively and as a matter of course, Charles's other hand went to the pocket where his revolver lay.

"Augustus, you are to wait for this gentleman," was her order to the coachman.

"Come. There is no one in. *He*" (with a stress on the pronoun) "has gone on a journey. No one is at home but our servants."

She let go his hand, for the front door was swinging open.

"Light up the eastern sitting-room, and bring us tea directly."

No sooner had the servant withdrawn than she threw her arms round Boroviecki's neck, and, kissing him passionately, pushed him into a sort of lobby, carpeted and hung with red.

"Love, I am coming instantly!" she cried, and disappeared.

He slowly took off his overcoat, slipped his revolver into his coat pocket, and, going to a door, which opened to let him pass, entered a dimly lighted boudoir. A white carpet, with a remarkably thick pile, rendered the heaviest step quite inaudible.

"What a perfectly romantic adventure!" Charles said to himself, dropping down upon a stool of Persian make—ebony inlaid with gold and silver patterns. He felt extremely tired and worn out.

"She's a strange woman, and a strange scene this is!" he thought, as he looked round the room. The boudoir was fitted up with such magnificence that even in a town so filled with

first-class mansions as Lodz was, it might well elicit a cry of admiration.

The walls were hung with silken stuffs of a rich amber tint, over which, in rough embroidery, purple-hued clusters of lilac were scattered. A large, wide sofa stretched along one of the walls from end to end, beneath a yellow canopy with green stripes, draped tent-wise, and supported on golden halberds.

Just under the top of the tent a lamp of amber- and ruby- and emerald-coloured glass threw a bizarre, bewildering light all round.

"A rags-and-bones-man's shop!" Charles muttered with a sort of angry scorn; yet, irritated as he was by the gaudy splendour, he could not forbear from gazing on the odd, eccentric, and precious pieces of furniture that he saw, of Japanese fashion, huddled together in disorder, and far too many for the size of the room.

Piles of silken cushions, with crude Chinese hues, lay on the sofa and on the milk-white carpet, which they seemed to tinge like great blots of spilt colour. The fragrance of burnt amber and of *violettes de Perse*, mingled with the odour of roses, floated about the room. On one of the walls there glittered a collection of most costly Oriental weapons, grouped round a large circular shield of Saracenic steel inlaid with gold, and so brightly burnished that the golden tracery and the edgings of pale amethysts shone and sparkled in the dusky boudoir with a variegated display of light. In one corner a huge fan of peacocks' feathers formed the background to a large statue of Buddha, cross-legged and gilt all over. In another there stood a great Japanese flower-stand, borne by golden dragons, and filled with snow-white azaleas in full bloom.

"Why, this is a millionaire's lumber-room!" Charles said to himself; for besides a highly cultivated natural taste and feeling for things beautiful, he had perfected it by his special studies in colour-harmony.

"Mr. Director, Madame will receive you," said an old clean-shaven footman, bowing low, as he lifted a heavy

portière of yellow velvet, sprinkled all over with painted chrysanthemums.

Charles followed the servant into the dining-room. Lucy wasn't there yet.

Boroviecki, left alone in the dining-room, cast a look round it. It was furnished with the usual banal luxury of Lodz: oak panellings half-way up the walls; sideboards of dark walnut wood, Brittany style, with lots of silver and of chinaware on the shelves; antique stools in mediæval German fashion, splendidly carved, and set round an immense table lit by a chandelier like a bouquet of tulips, each tulip glowing with an electric bulb. Part of this table had been laid for tea.

He seated himself, having waited for some time, when he happened to notice a scrap of paper on the floor. This he picked up to lay on the table, but instinctively cast a glance at it.

It was a telegram in the Bucholc firm cipher, used only on occasions of supreme importance. Boroviecki, who knew the key, was exceedingly puzzled.

"What can this thing be doing here?"

Turning the paper, he saw it was addressed: "Bucholc—Lodz."

Scruples, he felt, were no longer in season; and he read:

"To-day Council decision.—Duty American cotton coming via Hamburg or Triest raised to 25 gold kopeks per pood.—Enforcement in fortnight.—Railway tariff transport cotton from west frontiers raised to 20 kop. per pood and verst.—Enforcement in month.—Publication in week."

Boroviecki put the paper away in his pocket, and jumped up from his chair in great excitement.

"What tremendous news! Half Lodz must go under.—Now I know why Knoll told me nothing: he did not trust me.—It is to Hamburg he is going, to purchase big stores of cotton.—He'll buy up all he possibly can and cut out all the lesser manufacturers.—A great stroke of business this!—Oh, for ready money to make purchases now! Ah!"—These

thoughts flashed through his mind, which seethed with furious impatience and unrestrained desire to make a fortune out of the news he had thus come across by mere chance. "Money! money!" he groaned in spirit, starting again from his seat.

There was a feverish glitter in his eyes, he quivered all over with excitement. His first idea was to escape from the place at once and return to town, where he could get hold of Moritz and talk the business over with him. This he might perhaps have done but for Lucy's sudden appearance and her arms thrown round his neck.

"You have had to wait. Pardon me; I was forced to change my dress from top to toe."

She kissed him, then took a seat and pointed to another quite close to her, but she now behaved calmly; for the servant had come in and was pouring out the tea.

To sit quiet, however, was impossible to her. Every now and then she would run to one of the sideboards and take thence many and multifarious condiments, which she set before Charles.

She was in a lemon-yellow tea-gown with very wide sleeves, adorned with cream-hued lace and a row of turquoises, and girt round the waist with a golden cord. Her luxuriant hair was drawn back and fastened with a broad Greek fillet and hairpins that shone bright with diamonds. The diamond necklace that she had worn at the theatre now sparkled again upon her unveiled bosom with rainbow magnificence; at times her beautiful arms peeped from her wide sleeves till her very shoulders became visible.

She was attractive beyond expression, but Boroviecki only very partially felt that attraction now. He answered her almost in monosyllables, drank his tea in haste, and only wished he could get away as soon as might be. The news he had learned was burning like fire within his brain.

Lucy, too, was in agonies of impatience, and followed the servant's deliberate movements with a look of exasperation. Unable to fall on Boroviecki's neck, she squeezed his hand so hard that he almost cried out with pain.

"What is it ails you?" she asked, seeing his embarrassment.

"My happiness!" he replied in French.

They talked together, but the conversation flagged. She was tortured by the servant's presence; he, by impatience and the necessity he was under to be sitting there, now that he knew the great secret—that the duty on cotton had risen from eight to twenty kopeks a pood!

"Shall we pass to the boudoir?" she asked, as soon as the meal was over.

She fixed him with her wonderful gleaming eyes, full of such meaning, her crimson mouth glowed with such ardent fire, that though Charles had risen merely to take his leave, he simply bowed—and followed her. Her attraction was irresistible.

When alone, she at once seized upon him with fiery impetuosity, but for one instant only. Whilst she was caressing him with a vehemence that words fail to describe—falling on her knees, hugging him fast, babbling random words in which her fondness found a vent, and, as it were, demented by the might of her passion—he was all the time thinking of that cotton business, of where he might see Moritz, of where money to make the intended purchase could be raised.

And yet he returned kiss for kiss, blandishment for blandishment, and again and again uttered speeches of burning love; but all this was done almost unconsciously, and by the power, given by custom, of saying the right thing on such occasions, rather than dictated by his heart, which just then was full of very different things indeed.

She, notwithstanding her frenzied state, and by means of that sort of intuition which the extremity of passion gives sometimes—knew there was something that kept them apart; and she all the more recklessly gave vent to her feelings, making up in herself for what failed in him; she thus set in motion all the power of enchantment possessed by an enamoured woman—a woman who would with a cry of gladness take even a blow from her lover—a woman for whom the greatest bliss lies in the conquest of him she loves,

yes, even by force, by compulsion—the compulsion of her own volcanic nature!

And she conquered in the end.

Charles forgot about factories and cottons and customs duties—and the whole world. He yielded to her love with that recklessness which is often found in men who, apparently cold, are able to suppress their emotions absolutely on the trifling occasions of everyday life. He gave way to the storm, and with the nerve-shattering delight of mysteries unveiled, allowed himself to be swept away.

"I love you!" she cried again and again.

"I love you!" he replied, feeling that for the first time in his life he had spoken those words with absolute sincerity: those words that, perhaps in the whole dictionary, are most often used for lying and deceit.

"Write that down, love, write that down," she entreated with childish persistency.

He took out a visiting-card, and for the last time printing a kiss on those fascinating violet eyes and on that burning mouth, he wrote: "Lucy, I love you."

She snatched the card from him, read it, kissed it many a time, and put it into her bosom, only to take it out again, read it, and kiss it and Charles alternately.

She at last noticed the coat of arms on the card.

"What's that?" she said.

"My coat of arms."

"I don't know what you mean."

He explained as best he could.

"That's beyond me quite.—After all, it matters nothing to me."

"What matters then?"

"That I love you!" And she closed his mouth with a kiss. "You see, I know nothing, I only love you. You are my mind: I want no more."

They continued to sit there very long, in the deep silence of the night and of that boudoir, through whose walls and hangings not a sound came in from the outside world. They sat there, absorbed in each other and in their love, wrapped

as it were in a cloud of ecstatic thought, and plunged in the enervating air, saturated with many scents and with the sounds of kisses, warm thrilling whispers, and rustling silks; with that lamplight, ruby-red and emerald-green, spluttering sometimes as it grew fainter and fainter and threw its flickering waves on the wall-hangings and the furniture, glimmering in mystery and trembling for a moment as it flared up and crept over the room, or dying away and fading in the ever-deepening twilight, in which Buddha alone loomed, glowing weirdly, whilst those peacocks' eyes looked down upon him, dimmer and dimmer, more and more inscrutable.

CHAPTER IV

CHARLES did not get out into the street until four in the morning. The coachman, tired of waiting, had driven back to the stable. The wind was roaring with a deep sound, and driving the water in the pools so violently before it that it splashed over the narrow path which passed for a side-walk, and even over the fences. Boroviecki shivered in the cold wet blast that chilled him to the marrow.

He stood still awhile, in front of Zuker's mansion; for he could see nothing but the shimmer of mud in front, and the dark buildings, tier on tier in the distance, with the factory chimneys just visible on the dusky grey background of the sky, over which the clouds were rushing at full speed, like so many bales of dirty cotton, carried away by the gale. He felt dazed still; so he went no farther, but leaned back against a paling, and strove to recover his scattered senses. Several times he had to pull himself together; for he continually had her caresses present to him, and his lips were scorched as with fire. With half-closed eyes, he used his umbrella to find out some firmer bit of ground, being as unsteady on his legs as any drunken man. He was not quite roused from his lethargy till he heard the dogs barking fiercely behind the palings; they at last woke him from that peculiar apathy which follows on overwhelming explosions of feeling.

"Kurovski must be in bed by now," he thought, much vexed when he remembered that he was to have met him at the Grand Hotel directly after the play. "I only hope this folly of mine may not have cost me too dear," he said, and

set off at a run, no longer caring though the road was deep in mud.

He could not find a cab till he had reached Piotrovska Street, when he ordered the driver to go full speed to the hotel.

"Ah! and that telegram!" he exclaimed, with a flash of remembrance, and read it over by the light of the carriage lantern.

"Back!" he commanded, "and go straight down Piotrovska. He may be in by now." Charles was thinking of Moritz. Once more the fever of excitement was coming over him.

He ordered the driver to wait, in case he should be wanted again, and rushed away to ring the bell.

No one answered. He was so enraged that he tore down the bell-pull, and stood there beating at the door with all his might; but it was long before Matthew came round to open it.

"Is Moritz at home?"

"Since he went to the synagogue—— Is it Mr. Moritz you mean?"

"Is he at home? Answer me," Charles roared in a fury.

Matthew was as drunk as could be. He came walking with a candle in his hand, quite undressed, his eyes half closed, and his face discoloured with clotted blood and bruises. "Mr. Moritz—I think I know—Mr. Moritz—— Aha!"

"You brute!" Charles screamed, and struck him a violent blow in the face.

Moritz was out. Baum was in, sleeping on the great divan in the dining-room, with his clothes on, and a cigarette between his clenched teeth.

Upon the table, on the floor, and on the sideboard, there lay plates and empty bottles in great number. The samovar chimney had a long green veil flung over it.

"Oh! I see. Antka has been here. He has enjoyed himself. —Max! Max!" he called out very loud, and shook the sleeper to wake him.

Max remained motionless, sleeping soundly, and snoring noisily.

Boroviecki, determined to find out from him where Moritz was, at last lost patience, and, taking the man by the shoulders, set him on his feet. Max, resentful at being waked, stumbled against a chair, and, catching it up, threw it with all his might on the table.

"Take that for waking me, you damned monkey!" And he sat down quietly on the divan, pulled off his coat, wrapped up his head in it, and fell asleep instantly.

Charles, now in despair, and finding it impossible to rouse Max, cried out: "Matthew!" "Matthew!" he called out again, and went into the ante-room.

"Coming, Mr. Director; but I can't find where the candle has gone to. I'm looking for it.—Coming!" the man said in a sleepy, cracked, and drunken voice, trying vainly to rise from the floor, where he had lain sleeping since Boroviecki knocked him down.

He rose to his knees, but fell down again face forward, working his arms about as if to swim. Boroviecki set him on his legs, led him into the dining-room, and propped him up against the stove.

"Now, where did you get drunk like that?" he asked. "How many times have I told you that if you drank I'd send you off to the devil! D'you hear what I say?"

"I hear, Mr. Director, I hear.—Aha! Mr. Moritz or somebody!" he stammered, trying to find his bearings, but to no purpose.

"Who has smashed your face so? It looks like a swine's snout."

"Smash my face?—Did anyone? By God! Mr. Director, no one can smash my face, for, by God, Mr. Director, I would break all his bones—spoil his mug—polish him off! He'd catch it fine, he would!"

Boroviecki, seeing that nothing was to be got out of a fellow so tipsy, brought a decanter of water, and, holding the man with one hand, poured it out over his head. Matthew twisted and squirmed about, and got away, but he was somewhat sobered. He wiped his bruised and bleeding face with his hands, and stared stupidly round him.

"Has Mr. Moritz been here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where has he gone to?"

"He went off with a little dark woman, I think, and was to go to the Grand Hotel."

"What people were here just now?"

"Oh, lots of them: Mr. Bein, Mr. Hertz, and other Jews. I got supper ready for you, with Agatha to help."

"And then you guzzled and drank like a pig.—But who smashed your face so?"

"Why, no one."

He felt his head and face mechanically, but the pain of the touch make him wince.

"Well, how did you get those knocks about your face, hey?"

"Well—perhaps—Mr. Moritz was here, and that dark monkey too, and the hunchback."

"Tell me at once where you got fuddled, and who knocked you about so!"

"Drunk I was not, and nobody beat me. I went out to get beer for the gentlemen. At the tavern there were some chaps I knew, and they stood me drinks. Good for us! I did the same for them: glass for glass, I and they.—Then there came in men from our bleachery: good Poles, men of my country; they stood me drinks. Good for us! So I did the same, glass for glass. But I was not drunk, by God! Mr. Director, as I live, I was as sober as you. Smell my breath, Mr. Director, and judge for yourself."

He leaned forward, closed his eyes, and, with the stove behind to steady him, blew hard into the room.

Boroviecki went out to his own, and let Matthew go on talking: "And then some weavers and fullers from old Mr. Baum's came in. They drank with us; we stood drinks; but those Germans—nasty fellows!—wouldn't stand drinks in their turn. Then I just tapped one of them (as with a straw) and down he went; and another hit me on the crown with his tankard. Then I just brushed him (as with a straw) and down he went too; and the Germans sprang at my

throat. I was not fighting, for I know you don't like that, Mr. Director. As an obedient servant, I wouldn't fight; only, when one had me by the hair, the others by the throat, and one more struck at my face, I said to myself: 'I would not have my coat, a gift of Mr. Director, spoiled'; so I said to him, friendly-like: 'Let go!' And he stuck me in the ribs with a knife. Then I banged his head against the wall—and he didn't get up any more.

"My fellows came to help me, and we polished them off all right. I didn't fight; I only just touched a man (as with a straw); a chicken would have stood it; but the swine fell down flat. They are a weak-legged folk; awfully weak, those Germans are. As with a straw I touched him—and behold, he lay flat on the ground!"

"You go to bed!" Boroviecki growled; and, putting out the light, led Matthew to the kitchen and went in search of Moritz.

Both the Victoria and the Grand Hotel were closed.

"Is Mr. Kurovski asleep?"

"No, sir; the room was prepared, but he never came at all."

"Was Mr. Welt here last evening?"

"He was, sir, with Mr. Cohn and some ladies; but they went to Arcadia afterwards."

He drove on to Arcadia, but found no one there. Other taverns where the young men of Lodz were wont to enjoy themselves were tried by him with like ill success.

"Where has that monkey hid himself?" he wondered petulantly; then on a sudden called out to the driver: "To the mead-shop! He's there if he's anywhere."

"All right, sir—in a jiffy!"

The man whipped up his horse as hard as he could, for it was going frightfully slow, stumbling at every rut and hole in the road; and over the cobbled way, with its deep and billowy depressions, the cab, like a boat on the waves, pitched and tossed to and fro.

Charles swore and clenched his teeth; but, endeavouring to get the better of those quivering nerves of his, that made

his hand shake till every cigarette he wanted to light went to pieces, he forced his mind back to that cotton business.

"Our man Bauer has sold the telegram to Zuker—and got well paid, of course.—What an extraordinary woman!" he broke off, reverting to his reminiscences of Lucy, in which he presently was plunged.

Though he had been acquainted with her for some years since, he had never paid special attention to her till now, being at the time intimate with a Mrs. Likiert; moreover, he had heard that she was almost as phenomenally silly as she was beautiful.—"But what a temperament!" he thought, full of burning memories of her.

For some time he had been aware that she was taking notice of him: her looks, as well as her persistent invitations to her house (which he had invariably declined), told him as much. And then, she was always to be found wherever she knew she should meet him.

The gossips of Lodz—where the men are noted for the zest and subtle art with which they work in that domain—had even before now set to whisper and put two and two together; but Boroviecki's detachment (he had been for the last few months engaged in planning the future factory, in which he was totally absorbed) had made them quite lose the scent.

He knew Zuker personally: a man who of recent years had grown into a millionaire, though beginning his career as a manufacturer in Lodz by purchasing odds and ends of used-up cotton prints, no longer of any value to their makers, or scraps of paper, or quantities of cotton dust, such as always are found about weaving looms. Charles strongly disliked him for the frippery he sold, vile imitations of the stuffs made by Bucholc, like them as to colours and patterns, but infinitely inferior in quality, yet sold so cheap that there was no competition possible.

He knew that Zuker's wife had no lover. In a town wherein every man, from the millionaire at the top to the very last wheel in the great economic machine, has to work hard and devote himself entirely to business, there are exceedingly

few professional Don Juans, and as few opportunities for intrigues and conquests. And besides, if such there happened to be, they were immediately blazoned and gossiped about.

"Has that woman anything like a soul? I wonder," Charles thought, at the remembrance of her unbridled transports. "Oh, why did I let myself in for it just at this very crisis in my affairs?—To the deuce with love, if it is to hamper me now that I am starting my factory, and on borrowed money too!—And yet——"

Then he reflected, seeking to decide whether his was true love, and ended by persuading himself quite honestly that what he experienced was real affection for the woman, and not the typical outburst of a healthy and vigorous temperament.

"Well," he concluded, "come what may, the game is well worth the candle!"

Here the driver, wheeling round, pulled up at the very corner of Spacerova Street, before the synagogue.

CHAPTER V

THE restaurant Charles had come to in his search after Moritz stood immediately behind the synagogue, and was surrounded by four-storeyed office buildings like huge stone boxes, but on three sides only: the fourth was bounded by the green railings of a small garden which ended in the great bare red walls of some factory. At the bottom of the yard there stood a small one-storeyed outhouse. Its windows shone bright, and from within there came a great hubbub, like the braying of many asses.

"Ah!" he thought, "the whole gang is in there," as he entered a large low-ceilinged saloon, so dim with cigar-smoke that he at first could make out nothing at all in the bluish-grey haze, just lit up by the golden globes of the gas-lights.

Hard on a score of persons sat close round a long table, shouting, talking loud, and singing, to the accompaniment of jingling plates and the stridulous clink of a broken glass now and then. The uproar was so confused and ear-splitting that the very walls seemed aquiver, and nothing could be heard.

Presently there came a slight lull, and from one end of the table a hoarse drunken voice struck up the song of "Agatha"—a favourite one: some abominable doggerel about a woman who is requested to pay for a kiss with a glass of beer! The name Agatha was repeated twice in every line, the drinkers yelling it in chorus when it came, to every possible and impossible air.

"Boom-boom! la la la! Agatha! Tra la la la! Agatha! Tsip tsip tsip! Agatha!"—And so on.

The song somehow roused them to such a pitch of excitement that they beat time on the table with their sticks, that tankards were hurled at the walls or shivered to pieces against the stove, and that some could not even help thumping the floor with chairs, singing all the time, madly and with eyes closed, like blind men: "Agatha! Agatha!"

In dismay, the landlord came to appeal to them: "Gentlemen, for Heaven's sake, pray make less noise! We shall have the police in here presently."

"You hold your tongue: it's we who pay.—Please, miss, another glass of beer."

"Agatha! Agatha!" one office clerk was howling low, with half-closed eyes, strenuously rapping on the table with his cane.

"Enjoyment after the Lodz fashion!" Charles grunted, while looking for Moritz.

"The Director!—Gentlemen, the firm of Herman Bucholc and Company! So we are all here now!—More brandy, miss!" Such was the speech of a tall thickset German.

He staggered about, making ample gestures, as if to say more; but his legs gave way, and he tottered back on to the sofa behind him.

"I have business with you—urgent business," Charles said, sitting down beside Welt and Leo Cohn, who drank quite apart from the rest.

"If you need money, here's my pocket-book," said Moritz, pointing to an inside coat-pocket of his. "Or wait a bit: let's go to the bar.—Why, devil take it! I'm tipsy!" he growled, attempting in vain to stand straight.

"Will you sit down, Mr. Director?" Leo gurgled. "Here's vodka, ah! And cognac too, ah!"

"Something to eat, pray; I'm ravenous."

A barmaid brought him some hot dogs; there was nothing else to be had. Boroviecki set to, paying no heed to the company, drinking and chatting in separate groups.

They were almost exclusively young men of Lodz, mostly employees in the offices and warehouses, with a sprinkling of technicians and specialists in other directions.

"Woman indeed! Hold your peace! Not worth while to be a woman: time lost," exclaimed, with a loud laugh, Felix Fishbin, a man universally known in Lodz.

"I say, König," he broke off, "you're my friend, but—I say it with sorrow—you grow more and more stupid every day. Your brain is all in your belly; really, I'm afraid for you.—Gentlemen, the man stuffs himself so tight that his skin will soon be too small and he'll have to jump out of it. Ho, ho!"

There was a general laugh, but König answered not a word. He went on drinking his beer and staring with lack-lustre eyes in front of him. His coat was off, and his shirt-collar undone.

"Now, Doctor, let's return to the problem of women," Fishbin continued to his neighbour, who sat with his chin sunk on his chest, incessantly and unweariedly twisting his blond moustache, and at times rather nervously brushing his coat-lapels, or pushing back out of sight his rather soiled cuffs.

"Yes, the problem is interesting, if only from a socio-psychological point of view."

"There is no problem at all! Do you know even one decent woman?"

"Mr. Felix, you are intoxicated! How can you? Why, I'll show you here in Lodz hundreds of the best and noblest and brightest," he cried, now thoroughly roused from his former apathy, jumping up and down in his seat, and brushing his coat-lapels with nervous movements of great rapidity.

"Those women must be your patients then, and you're bound to speak well of them."

"From a socio-psychological point of view, what you say is——"

"Is truth—from every point of view and however you take it. Yes, it is true—true—true! And prove to me that it is not so."

"That's what I am telling you."

"Mere talk, all that, mere prating; I want facts. I am a

realist, Dr. Vysocki, I am a positivist.—Barmaid! the coffee-machine. And chartreuse."

"Very well then. I name the wives of Bobrovski, of Anzel, of Bibrich; what of them?"

"Ha ha! Name some more. I have had capital fun with these."

"How dare you? They are honest women," the doctor cried, flushing scarlet.

"And how do you know? Have you got them on commission?" Felix retorted cynically.

"I have not yet named the best of them: Zuker's wife, for instance, and Mrs. Wolkman."

"They don't count. One is kept locked up by her husband; the other is too busy to see anyone: she has had her fourth baby in three years."

"And Mrs. Kessler, then, and Mrs. Grosglik? Are they shoddy goods for you? Answer me that."

"I shall not."

"Ah, you see!" Dr. Vysocki exclaimed, twirling his moustache with a radiant face.

"I am a realist, and say nothing, only because plain women are of no account for me. Now these are so very ugly that not even Leo Cohn (who would take anyone) would take them on commission!"

"They count for me, though, and in the first rank too; for, besides the common decency of their sex, they possess morality."

"Oh! Morality? What sort of goods is that? Who trades in it?" Felix replied with a roar of laughter.

"Felix, that's a good joke, a first-rate joke of yours!" Leo Cohn called to him across the table, clapping his hands.

The doctor drank silently the hot coffee poured out to him by Felix, twirled his moustache, brushed his coat-lapels, pushed his cuffs in, and turned to his other neighbour, who sat tippling in silence, now and then wiping his spectacles with a red handkerchief.

"And you, Counsellor, do you think about women as Felix does?"

"I say—look here—hard to explain. H'm." And, dismissing the matter with a wave of his hand, he drank some more beer, lit his cigarette, which was always going out, and fixed his eyes upon the flaming match.

"I ask you what you think of women!" the doctor said fiercely, setting himself to take up the cudgels on behalf of women once more.

"You see, my dear sir, I do not think at all now; I am drinking my beer." And, waving his hand disdainfully, the lawyer plunged his face into the fresh tankard the barmaid had set before him.

He took a long pull, and wiped away the froth from the scanty moustache that overhung his mouth like a buff-coloured bit of thatch.

"Time is money!—Whose turn to pay?" he observed, knocking with his tankard upon the table; then, intending to raise it to his lips, his hand failed him: beer and tankard rolled on to the floor. He was, however, unconscious of his loss. Turning half round in his arm-chair, he threw a napkin over his head—and went to sleep.

Meanwhile Charles was growing furiously impatient. "Moritz, you have fuddled yourself quite enough. Let's go home; there's a big piece of business afoot."

Moritz, now quite drunk and incapable, was resting his head on his hands, and whenever addressed, made reply: "I am Moritz Welt, Piotrovska, 75, first floor.—Go to the devil!"

"Mr. Cohn, I'd like to do some business with you," Boroviecki said.

"How much do you want?"

He clicked his tongue, snapped his fingers, and his pocket-book was out in a moment.

Boroviecki smiled. "You are no slowcoach," he said.

"I am Leo Cohn. How much?"

"Moritz will let you know to-morrow. I only wished to make sure. Many thanks."

"All the money I have and can raise is at your disposal."

"Thanks once more.—For three months at most."

"A mere trifle; don't mention it. Of no consequence between friends."

Here Moritz moaned: "Soda-water!" And he drank it, when brought, straight from the siphon.

"Do you want me to drive home?" he asked presently.

"I do. At once. Very big affair."

"*Our* business?"

"Ours. Extremely important; you have no idea."

"If it's business, then I am pretty near sober now. Come along."

Charles went out, holding Moritz up; for he still reeled and could not keep his balance. After them there came through the open door a rush of noise and clamour pouring out into the dark quiet courtyard, and dying away into the distance and the night.

Dawn had risen upon Lodz by now. The black chimneys were more and more distinctly looming forth; the roofs began to glimmer, lit up by the pallid day-break, scattering its delicate roseate and pearly hues over the world. A frost had come, hardening the mud, and in places covering the pools with thin sheets of ice, whitening the arches over the street gutters, and adorning the trees with a hoary deposit, very beautiful. The day promised to be splendid. Moritz breathed deep in the chilly, frozen air, and was presently almost himself again.

"Do you know, I cannot remember to have ever been so drunk in my life. It's unpardonable in me; there's a noise in my head like the bubbling of a samovar."

"I'll get you some tea with lemon-juice in it. You'll soon be quite sober. And then there will be such a surprise that you'll want to get tipsy again."

"How I wonder what it can be!"

As soon as they came in, Charles, who preferred not to wake Matthew, who slept in a kneeling position in front of the fire-place, poured water into the samovar, and lit the gas under it.

Moritz had taken a most drastic means to get sober. He had poured cold water all over his head, and even taken a

cold bath! Having drunk many cups of tea, he at last felt quite restored to sobriety.

"Ah! I am now in my right senses again. But what the devil! how disgustingly cold I feel!"

Meanwhile Charles was calling "Max!" and shaking his friend very vigorously. But young Baum made no answer, and only wrapped the coat all the tighter over his head.

"It's no use, he's too fast asleep, and I'm in a hurry and can't wait. Read this wire, Moritz. But," he added, "do not look at the address." And he handed him the telegram.

"Well, but it's in cipher; I can't make out one word!"

"Of course. I'll read it out to you."

And he read it slowly, distinctly, stressing every word, especially figures and dates.

Moritz, quite himself again, started up in his chair at the very first words he heard, and proceeded to devour mentally the contents of the whole message. Charles had finished, and was looking at him in triumph, while Moritz still remained motionless, contemplating things. Several times he had to fix his glasses on to his nose; he fell to smiling sweetly, as to some invisible loved one, and pulled nervously at his beard, Finally he spoke in grave tones.

"Charles, I tell you, we have a future before us, with lots of money. This message is worth a hundred thousand roubles to us; or fifty thousand at the very least. On such an occasion as this, we may well embrace each other. Ah! what a stroke of business we shall make!" And he made a step towards Boroviecki, intending to embrace him in the joy and rapture of his heart.

"None of that, Moritz. What we want now is cash, not embraces."

"You are right, quite right. What we want is money, money, money!"

"The more we can buy, the more we shall gain."

"But what a to-do there will be in Lodz! Heigh-ho! Should Shaya or Bucholc get to know of it—if either managed to buy up all the cotton—how mad the other men would be! —How did you come by this news?"

"That's my secret, Moritz. It was a reward." And he smiled within himself, as his thoughts flew back to Lucy.

"Your secret is a great asset for you. But there's one thing that amazes me."

"And what's that?"

"Charles, I didn't think you had it in you. Frankly, I never should have imagined that, with such a piece of good fortune in your hands, you could decide to share it with us."

"That means you didn't know me."

"It means I know you now still less than I did." And he eyed him as though suspecting some trick. How anyone could willingly share profits with another was inconceivable to him.

"We'll talk this over later, and at leisure," said Charles. "If I share with you, it's because you are my partners and old friends. And besides, I feel the pride of doing them a service."

"Pride costs dear."

"Would you appraise even pride?"

"Can't one appraise everything?"

"Appraise our friendship then. How much is it worth?"

"Charles, don't laugh at me when I say I can state its worth in roubles. The very fact that you and I are living together gets me credit for twenty thousand more than I should otherwise have. You see how open and frank I am with you."

Boroviecki laughed with pleasure to hear him say this.

"But what I do now, you also would do without fail; and so would Baum as well."

"As to Baum, Charles, I fear, I very much fear he is a cunning fellow: a man of business. For myself, yes; I would do the same, and be delighted."

As he spoke, he stroked his beard and set his glasses astraddle, so as to mask the expression of his eyes and mouth, which gave the lie to what he was saying.

"You are a gentleman—a true Boroviecki."

"Max, you lie-abed, get up, will you!" Charles bawled in Baum's ear.

"I won't be waked," Max cried in a rage, kicking out.

"Don't kick, but get up; we've got business news that won't wait."

"Charles, why wake him?" Moritz whispered very low.

"Surely we must all three consult together."

"And why not we two by ourselves?"

"Because we are to be three," Boroviecki retorted coldly.

"Of course we are to be. But I meant that we might as well arrange matters without him, and tell him all when he has done sleeping and got up.—In Lodz we form a trio—friends of the first water."

He set to pace the room with quicker steps. He spoke of the profits to be made, jotted figures down, sat for a minute at the table, drinking a cup of tea held in both hands and in his excitement letting his glasses again and again fall into his tea. Then he would let out a curse, wipe them dry on his coat-tails, and write columns of figures on the oil-table-cloth, which he afterwards rubbed out with his moistened finger.

Baum meantime had risen, puffing and panting, sworn in several languages, eaten all that was over from the supper of yestereve, lit his short English pipe, knocked the ashes out into a saucer, and said: "What do you want? Say it quick, for I am sleepy."

"You will not go to bed. You have to listen."

"Don't prattle!"

Charles read aloud the telegram.

Moritz explained the entire plan, which was very simple: to get cash, as much cash as possible, and to go at once to Hamburg to buy raw cotton and ship it to Lodz before the customs tariff and the freight rates were raised. Then sell it as a matter of course, at the highest profit.

Baum meditated a long while. He wrote something in his note-book, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, stretched his long, bony arms, and said: "Put me down for ten thousand roubles; that's all I can manage. Good-night!"

He rose and made for his bedroom.

"Wait a little; we must talk matters over together. Time enough to sleep afterwards."

"Devil take you and your palavers! Oh, those Poles! When in Riga, for three whole years I never slept once properly; they were every night and all night long 'talking matters over' with me. And it's just the same here."

He unwillingly sat down again and proceeded to fill his pipe.

"You, Moritz, how much will you give?"

"The very same sum: ten thousand. Can't raise more just now."

"Then I," said Charles, "am going to put in as much."

"Gains or losses are to be shared alike."

"But," said Baum, "which of us is to go?"

"Moritz alone can: he is well up in such dealings, they are his specialty."

"Very good; I'll go.—How much cash will be paid down on account?"

"I have just fifteen roubles," Max observed sarcastically, "and you can also have my diamond ring to pawn. The pawnbroker will give you more than he would me."

"I," said Charles, "have by me four hundred roubles, of which you can take three hundred."

"Who will stand surety for your notes of hand, Baum?"

"You shall have all in cash."

"And I, should I not be able to get cash in time, shall send you notes of hand with first-rate endorsements."

A pause ensued. Max was resting his head on the table, eyeing Moritz the while, who was writing and casting up accounts. Charles strode about the room with slow steps, occasionally refreshing himself by inhaling scents from a costly smelling-bottle.

The day, now fully come, poured its crude white morning rays through the windows, heavily curtained with *guipure*, and dimmed the lamps and the tapers burning in their great bronze chandeliers.

A great calm reigned in Lodz—the calm of Sunday rest, spreading all over the town and into every habitation. The far-away clatter of a cab sounded loud, rumbling over the frozen mire and through the empty, deserted street. Charles

threw open a tiny window in the casement, to let in some fresh air and look outside. Roofs and pavement were white with hoar-frost, sparkling like gems in the sun, that was rising at a great distance from Lodz and its factories, whose chimneys, like a dense and sombre forest, rose up in front with clear-cut though harsh outlines, strongly traced on the gold and azure background of the sky.

"Well," said Charles, turning away from the window, "and what if the affair fails?"

"It fails, then, doggoned! and there's an end of it!" Max grunted with cool unconcern.

"But then we may lose not only our profits, but our capital—and perhaps our factory that is to be."

"That's out of the question," cried Max stormily, striking the table. "The factory has got to be started. I cannot go on with my father any more. And how long will Father himself keep going? A year—perhaps two—and his sons-in-law will have sucked him dry. And Zuker will eat him up besides. He has already begun, with the imitations of our counterpanes and coloured blankets, which he sells at half the prices we can afford to quote. Yes, he'll eat us up alive, he will. And I was not made for a hired workman in another man's concern. I am thirty, and need to set up for myself."

"I too refuse to give up the factory idea. Somehow or other we must realize it. Bucholc too; I can't stay with that man any more."

"Are you afraid of the risk, then?" said Moritz.

"Yes, for we may lose all."

"You, Charles, come what may, cannot be ruined. What with your special knowledge, and your name, and your gentle birth—and your face—you can always and easily come in for a million—though possibly saddled with Müller's daughter."

"How can you talk so? I have a fiancée—whom I love."

"That's no hindrance; one may have two fiancées at a time, and love both of them—and marry a third with heaps of money!"

Charles made no answer. Miss Mada Müller and her child-like prattle had come rushing into his mind. He set to pacing the room, while Max sat at the table, and smoked his pipe, and dangled his long legs, basking in the kisses of the sun. Its beams, shining athwart the windows of the opposite house, threw a long, golden streak, filled with tremulous dancing specks, upon his drowsy face and on the dark head of Moritz, who was sitting at the other end of the table.

"If you fear risks," said the latter, "I'll give you some advice; or, rather, I will just point out that there are risks. Suppose all the cotton traders in Lodz know the news; that I find them all there before me when I get to Hamburg? Suppose this great, this desperate need of theirs sends the price of cotton up beyond measure? And if we find no one in Lodz to sell our raw cotton to—what then?"

"We shall use it in our factory, and make more money still," Max observed, turning one side of his head and face to catch the sunbeams.

"Well, but there's a way out of all these difficulties. You will have your profit, and without any risks whatever."

"How's that?" Charles asked, stopping in his stride.

"Give the whole affair up to me. I offer you five—no—ten thousand roubles for your shares in the business—whether I lose or gain—and that in ready cash, to be paid up in a few hours, and without any claim on you."

"Swine!" was Baum's muttered comment.

"Be quiet, Max; he makes the offer out of friendship."

"Certainly, for if I lose, you will still be able to start the factory; and in case I succeed, the factory will lose nothing."

"Let's lose no time in talking rot," said Charles. "We must go to bed. We shall make our venture at equal risks, and you, Moritz, must start for Hamburg this very day."

"But we want proper guarantees. He's buying with our money, and may declare it is his own; he's quite up to that!"

"How can you, Max?" Moritz returned indignantly. "Is our friendship and my word of honour not worth a dead dog?"

"Your word is gold, and your friendship a good security, but—business is business."

"Let's arrange matters so," said Charles. "Moritz will buy the cotton, and send it on to us, C.O.D., by fast goods-train. We shall pay here."

"And how can I be sure you will not leave me out of the affair altogether? Ah!"

"Swine!" Max yelled, stung to the quick, and beating on the table with his fist.

"Shut up, Max, he's right. Let's sit down and make a written agreement and have it afterwards witnessed and legalized by a notary."

They at once set themselves to draw up an agreement in due form, containing a great many clauses, that formed them into a sort of company: three traders in raw cotton. In this instrument every contingency was foreseen.

"Now we know where we stand," Moritz said. "How much do you allow me for managing the affair?"

"The usual commission on each bale, to begin with; after which we shall see what we can do."

"Please pay down in advance as much as you can. You shall have a strict account of the losses incurred through the Hamburg journey—losses to my agency, which will be doing nothing during that time."

"Swine!" Max shouted for the third time, turning sunwards the other side of his face.

"Max, you have three times called me a swine. And I, though but once, call you an ass. Remember we are doing business, not making love or courtship. You yourself would circumvent God, if you could but manage to do so; and you call me a swine because I claim simply what's mine by right? I appeal to Charles."

"You be hanged and go to the devil!"

"Come, come, enough of this squabbling.—Moritz, will you take to-night's express?"

"I will."

"Only, my dear friends, just remember about the cotton:

no one, either now or at any time, is to know where we got our information from."

"But even we two don't know."

"A secret shared by three is none."

"Now, let's off to bed; and you, Charles, don't wake me. —Come, Moritz, my boy; a farewell kiss, since we're parting. I shall not see you before you leave; shall be in bed till to-morrow morning. So good-bye—and mind, don't take us in," he added playfully, embracing Moritz with all his heart; for though always quarrelling and brawling, they were somehow fond of each other.

"Take you in? Nobody could," Moritz grumbled, apparently regretting the impossibility.

Noon was past when Charles woke.

The sun shone straight into his bedchamber, and its rays flooded the exquisite furniture and appointments.

Matthew, washed and tidied up, and in Sunday apparel, came in on tiptoe.

"What is the matter?" Charles asked; for Bucholc would frequently send him directions overnight.

"Nothing from the factory, sir; only folks from Kurov, with a letter. They have been waiting here all the forenoon."

"Let them wait. Bring me the letter, and let them have some tea."

Charles dressed and went to wake his friends. Both had gone.

"Matthew, is it long since the gentlemen left?"

"Mr. Baum got up at nine, telephoned home for a carriage, and drove off as soon as it came."

"The age of miracles is not yet over."

"And Mr. Moritz went out at eleven. He ordered me to pack his travelling-valise and take it to the night express."

"Call these people in.—There's something wrong with me; what is it?" he thought, rubbing his forehead. His head was heavy, and he felt out of sorts.

The events of the night—the theatre, the boxes, Lucy, the wired message, the tavern, and Moritz, and Baum, whirled

about his brain, fragmentary and nebulous, and passed away, leaving after them a dull sense of weariness.

He cast his eyes on a slender crystal vase, with a most lovely pattern of old French fleurs-de-lis on the deep-purple ground of coloured glass; and the sun shining through it tinted with blood-red and orange the cream-hued silk table-cover.

"It's a pretty combination," he said listlessly; he did not care to gaze any longer.

"Praised be Jesus Christ!" said a voice; and he turned to meet the visitors.

"So you are from Kurov. Have you got a letter from your young lady?"

He stretched out his hand, and noted that it was faintly yellow.

"Yes, there is something written.—Hand it over, Mother," said a grave-looking peasant in a white capote with a bordering of black braid. He stood in the doorway, bolt upright, holding a sheepskin cap pressed against his capote with both hands. His blue eyes looked hard at Boroviecki, while ever and anon he tossed back a mane of tow-coloured hair that would come tumbling down over his clean-shaven face.

The woman, having extricated the letter from wellnigh a dozen wrappings, handed it to Charles, after embracing his knees.

He quickly read the letter through.

"Is your name Soha?" he queried.

"Ay, Soha is my name.—Speak, Mother!" the peasant replied, poking her in the ribs with his elbow.

"It is true, sir; he is Soha. I am his wife."

"We have come to beg you for work to do in the factory, and for——" Here she hesitated, with a side-glance at her husband.

"Ay, Mother, tell all about it. From the beginning."

"Well, sir, I will tell all, as it were in confession. We had a cabin close to the manor; it was the first from the village——"

"As short as you can, please; I have little time."

"Say, Mother, that which took place, for the gentleman is in haste."

"Well," Boroviecki interrupted after a time, "that's enough. —You have, as I understand, been burned out? And now you want work in the factory?"

"Just so, honourable sir. We are beggars; everything's burned—cabin, cow-byre, and live-stock too—all!"

She burst into tears, while her husband stood gravely by, with solemn eyes fixed on Boroviecki, and tossing back from time to time his tawny mane, ever falling over his eyes.

"Know you any man in Lodz?"

"There are here several men of our parts. There is Antek Michael's son.—Mother, speak out."

"Ay, there are several; but how are we to find them?"

"Soha, come here again on Tuesday at one. I shall find work for you.—Matthew!" he called out, "find lodgings for these people, and see to their wants."

Matthew made a wry face; the order was not to his taste; he looked down upon that sort of people.

"Now go. God be with you. Come on Tuesday."

"I shall come.—Mother, speak out."

She bent down to Boroviecki's knees and, embracing them, "I have eight eggs," she said, "laid by our only hen—the one that was not burnt. I ask you, gracious sir, to accept them: may they do you good! It's with all our heart we offer them," and she placed a bundle at his feet.

"All right. Thanks. Come on Tuesday."

"I shall. May they do you good!" And Soha bent down to Boroviecki's knees.

He broke away from them and went into the next room.

"What primitive creatures—what survivals!" he grunted, though really touched—a little. Then he sat down to read his fiancée's letter again.

"Dear Charles,

"Many thanks for your last letter. It gave Grandfather great pleasure, and drew tears from my eyes, I was so delighted. How kind of you to send me those flowers—and by express messenger too!"

That made him smile. It was too funny! Why, those flowers were a present from his sweetheart, and so many that he did not know where to put them; so he had passed them on to his fiancée.

"Oh, what splendid roses! Were they grown in Lodz? Or has my dear Charles ordered them from Nice, as he once did? If so, it would be very pleasant to me, but painful as well, for I have nothing so lovely to offer in return. Do you know, these flowers are all nearly as blooming as they were at first, a fortnight ago; is it not wonderful? True, I take great care of them. Not one leaf but I have put my lips to, repeating: 'I love!' But Grandfather makes fun of me, and says he will write you about it; so here I am, confessing it to you myself. I feel sure you will not take it amiss, will you?"

"O my dear Anne!" he murmured. His feelings were getting the better of him, and he read on, with glistening eyes.

"As to the money, all is settled: it is on deposit in the Commercial Bank, and at your disposal; for I ordered it to be placed there in your name, in *our* name."

"The girl is of pure gold!" he thought.

"When are you starting the factory? I am waiting most impatiently to know, for I am so eager to see it, and to see my dearest Charles—a factory-owner! Grandfather has even made a siren whistle, and wakes us and calls us all to breakfast and dinner with it.

"Yesterday Mr. Adam Stavski was here. Do you remember him? It seems you were together at college. He told us many a curious and funny thing about your life. It is only from him that I heard my dear Charles was such a naughty boy in those days, and, even at college, loved by the ladies! But Grandfather denies it all stoutly, and says Mr. Adam Stavski is a professional story-teller. Which of them do you tell me to believe?

"I must end now, for my eyes are very tired, and Grandfather is calling and calling me to go to bed. Good-night, my fairy Prince, good-night! To-morrow I'll write more. Good-night!

"Anne."

The postscript recommended the bearer very warmly to Charles.

"The money's all right—twenty thousand roubles. She's a

girl in a thousand.—To give up all her dowry to me, and without a thought!" He read the letter over again, and locked it up in his desk.

"Yes, a dear good devoted girl, but—— Why is there that *but?*—Oh, the devil!"

He stamped wildly on the carpet, and flung heaps of papers about the table.

"Yes, good she is; perhaps the best girl I know—but—but—is she what I care for? Do I love her? Have I ever loved her?—Let's put the question quite candidly," he thought, with deliberate self-examination.

Matthew came in. "Mr. Director, President Bucholc's carriage is here."

Charles got in, and drove to Bucholc's mansion. It was quite at the end of the town, further out than his factories were, and stood in a large park, one end of which was bounded by the walls of the factories which towered above it: a one-storeyed house, called a palace, built in Renaissance style, with something both of Berlin and of Lodz: domelike turrets at each corner, several ornamented façades, and a terraced roof, provided with an iron balustrade.

A clump of large, but dismal-looking birch-trees rose with silvery trunks all along the carriage-drive. The walks, strewn with coal cinders, ran like strips of black lining amongst the roses and exotic trees, which stood in their winter swaddling of straw in long, straight lines cutting one another at right angles, all about the big rectangular lawn, at each of whose four corners rose a statue, now muffled up in pieces of tattered flannelette, discoloured by many rains and frosts. Glittering in sunshine athwart trees and shrubs, a greenhouse was visible close to the factory walls at one end of the park. As to the park itself, it was dreary and ill kept.

A footman, in a black livery, ushered Boroviecki into the antechamber, which was carpeted and embellished with photographs of the works and of various groups of workmen, and with maps of the estates belonging to Bucholc. Four doors led to the ground-floor interior; an iron winding staircase, to the first floor. A great lantern of wrought iron,

Gothic style, hanging from the ceiling, shed a gentle light around.

The footman, walking in front, raised a *portière* and opened the door. Boroviecki, slowly following, traversed a magnificent room, upholstered in a most ponderous, massive way, and rather in obscurity, the blinds being almost down. A thick carpet muffled any sound of steps. The place was depressing, with its atmosphere of solemn and chilly gravity. The furniture stood clad in dark-hued wrappers; mirrors, girandoles, chandeliers, nay, even the pictures on the walls, were veiled and vanishing in the dim light, in which nothing could glitter but the bronze ornamentation of the majolica stoves and the gilt stucco of the ceiling.

"Mr. Boroviecki!" the footman announced, ushering him into a room where, close to the window, nestling in a big easy-chair, Mrs. Bucholc sat, holding a stocking in her hand.

"Good day, Mr. Boroviecki!" she said, not waiting for his greeting; and, taking a knitting-needle out, she stretched forth her hand to him with an automatical movement.

"Good day, madam," he said, kissing her hand, and passed on.

"Kundel! Kundel!" a parrot screamed after him, as it swung, perched on the window-sill.

Mrs. Bucholc stroked it, smiled fondly at a bevy of sparrows fighting under the window, cast a glance on the sunlit world outside, and went on with her knitting.

It was in the corner study that Boroviecki met Bucholc. He was sitting close to a huge dark-green stove of Danzig tiles, adorned with most beautiful patterns. In it a fire was burning, which he continually poked with the stick he always had by him.

"Good day.—Kundel! a chair for the gentleman," he roared out at the footman, who stood by the door, ready at his beck and call.

Charles, turning his back to the wall, seated himself by the old man's side. Bucholc eyed him for some time with those red-rimmed hawk-eyes of his that pierced like gimlets.

"I am ill," he said, pointing to his legs, that were swathed

in white flannel, stretched out on a low stool in front of the fire, and looked just like two rolls of raw material.

"Is it always the same thing? Rheumatism?"

"Yes, yes," was the answer, as an acute pang contorted his greyish-yellow face.

"A pity, Mr. President, that you did not winter in San Remo, or elsewhere in the south."

"Of what use would that have been? I should only have delighted Shaya and everyone who wishes me to pop off as soon as possible.—Kundel!" he said to the footman; "set this right—" pointing to one leg that was slipping off the stool. "Have a care! Have a care!" he screamed.

"I think there are but very few who would have you die. Possibly no one at all in Lodz. I may say I'm sure there are none."

"Nonsense! They all would have me die—all.—And, just to spite them, I mean to live yet a good long time.—So, then, you think no one envies me, do you?"

"Is there anyone that nobody envies?"

"How much do you think Shaya would give to have me dead?"

"Well, I may suppose that, to have you ruined at least, miserly though he is, the man would give very, very much indeed."

"Do you think so?" The old man's eyes blazed with hatred.

"All Lodz knows it."

"And he would manage to bilk them when he paid—with forged notes or worthless bills of exchange.—A cur!" Here his head sank down upon his chest, on to his padded dressing-gown with patched elbows, and he looked at the fire, musing.

Boroviecki knew the servile respect which millionaires exact too well to trouble him in his reverie, but waited to be addressed. His eyes wandered round the walls, hung with damask silk of a rich cherry-purple, with broad borders of gold. A few very mediocre German chromolithographs marred them. An enormous mahogany desk stood in a corner between two windows, a screen of stained glass shading the

light on either side. An oilcloth imitation of parquetry, very much the worse for wear, covered the study floor.

"Are you going to say anything?" the old man snarled presently.

"The talk was about Shaya just now."

"I've enough of Shaya!—Kundel! tell the fellow Hamer to come in. What? I am to take my pills in five minutes, and the fool is not here yet?—Do you know yesterday's news?"

"I know what Mr. Knoll told me at the play."

"Do you go to the play?"

"Well, Mr. President, and so do you."

"Mr. Boroviecki, I am Bucholc: I may go wherever I choose." And he raised his head proudly, with a crushing look.

Boroviecki answered in an undertone, with a provoking smile he could not suppress: "It is the theatres that are in fault, for being open to all who can buy a ticket, and not closed to all but a few."

"Oh, I am not listening to your rigmarole!" Bucholc snapped, poking the fire with his stick till the sparks flew about the room.

"Mr. President, permit me to take my leave," said Boroviecki, rising; the old man's words had incensed him.

"No, be seated; we shall have dinner in a minute. You have no cause for offence. You know how much I prize you —you, a Pole in a thousand!—Has Knoll told you everything?"

"All about yesterday's failures?"

"Yes, oh yes! He has had to go on urgent business, and I want you to take his place during his absence, while Murray takes yours in the printing-room."

"Very good. As to Murray, he's a very able fellow."

"And a fool. Sit down. I like Poles, but there is no talking to you people. A word offends you—and off you go! Softly, softly, Mr. Boroviecki; do not forget that you are in my employ."

"Mr. President mentions the fact too often for me to forget it for even one instant."

"Do you, then, think the reminder is needless?" Bucholc asked, with a friendly smile.

"That depends on those to whom and before whom it is made."

"What if I gave you horses to drive without whip or bridle?"

"A very good comparison; only it is scarce applicable to everyone in your service alike."

"I apply it, not to you, nor to some (*some*, mind you) of your associates, but only to the mass of ignorant workers."

"Yet this mass of ignorant workers consists of men."

"Of brutes, of brutes!" he cried, striking at the stool with all his force with his stick. "Don't look like that: I have the right to say what I say; I, who give them the bread they eat."

"True, but that bread is earned. They can claim it as a right."

"They earn it, but through me. I give them work to do; where would they all be but for me?"

"They would find work elsewhere," Boroviecki said quietly, but his blood was beginning to simmer in his veins.

"They would die of hunger, Mr. Boroviecki; die like dogs!"

Boroviecki was silent, exasperated by the old man's fatuous pride, who, though he stood alone in Lodz for his intelligence and his educated mind, was nevertheless unable to grasp such a simple truth.

Just then a man came in, saying: "Mr. President, I was on my way here when I met Augustus."

"Hold your tongue! Two minutes more, and you would have been behind time!—Stay!" he called harshly to his "court physician," who, somewhat taken aback by such a reception, stood demurely a few steps away from the door, and waited with an expression of dismay, with his eyes glued to Bucholc's face; while the latter, silently and with a frowning brow, was watching the hands of an old silver time-piece.

"Be careful, Hamer, be careful: I pay you for being

that, and well too," he said after a while, without raising his eyes.

"Mr. President!"

"When Bucholc speaks, you'll just hold your tongue," he said, emphasizing his words with a savage look. "I'm a punctual man. Told once for all to take pills hourly, I do so.—You, Mr. Boroviecki, must enjoy splendid health. As anyone can see."

"Such excellent health that, if I remain two years more in the printing department, I shall have consumption. The doctors have told me so already."

"Two whole years! Ah, how much cotton can be printed in two years!—Hamer, the pills!"

Hamer, in his blandest manner, counted out fifteen homœopathic pills into Bucholc's extended hand.

"How slow you are! Why, you cost me as much as a first-rate machine! Faster," he grunted, and swallowed the pills.

The footman offered him a glass of water on a silver tray, to drink after the medicine.

"He orders me to take arsenic: a new sort of cure. Well, we shall see, we shall see."

"I see, Mr. President, that you are much better already."

"Shut up, Hamer; nobody asked you."

"Have you been taking this arsenic cure a long time?" Boroviecki inquired.

"These last three months," he replied. "Hamer, you may go!" he added haughtily.

The doctor bowed and withdrew.

"A sweet man this doctor is!" Boroviecki laughed. "Nerves all made of cotton-wool!"

"I give him enough to make them so. Oh, he's well paid for it!"

"There's a telephone call for Mr. Boroviecki." The official on duty attached to Bucholc's private telephone had appeared in the doorway.

"Mr. President, may I——?"

Bucholc gave a nod.

Charles went down to Bucholc's private office, where the telephone was.

"This is Boroviecki; who is speaking?" he asked, putting his ear to the receiver.

"This is Lucy.—I love you!" was the answer, far off and tremulous in his ear.

"Crazy woman!" he said aside, with an ironical smile; but to the receiver: "Good-day."

"Come at eight this evening. No one will be at home. Come: I await you. I love you. Hear this kiss! . . . Good-bye."

And he heard a whirring sound of smacked lips—the blurred shadow of a kiss.

"Quite out of her mind.—She'll be a hard nut to crack, and it won't be an easy thing to please her," he thought, as he returned upstairs, more teased than pleased by this demonstration of love.

Bucholc, wedged fast in his arm-chair, with his stick in his lap, was perusing a large note-book full of figures, and so deeply absorbed thereby that his under lip would frequently catch at his short moustache, a movement that the factory people used to call "sucking his nose," and always meant that he was cogitating profoundly.

Beside him lay a pile of letters and other documents on a low stand: it was the day's mail, which he usually saw to, himself.

"Mr. Boroviecki, help me to sort these letters; you are taking Knoll's place for the time being; and besides, I want to divert you a bit!"

Boroviecki looked at him inquiringly.

"With the letters, yes. You'll see what letters I get, and about what." He put the note-book behind him.

"Kundel! Give them here."

The footman poured all the letters from the stand on to his lap. Bucholc, with amazing swiftness, seized envelope after envelope, flinging them behind him with the order: "For the office!" The servant caught them in the air—big envelopes with various firms' addresses.

"For Knoll—letters to my son-in-law."

"For the factory!" (These were addressed to the factory, to be delivered to the workers.)

"Main office!"—(railway invoices, demands, bills, and so on).

"Printing department!"—(price-lists of dyes, samples of colours on thin cards, painted samples of patterns).

"The hospital!"—(letters to the factory hospital and the doctors there).

"Meryenhof!"—(letters to the management of the landed estates, under the management of the factory).

"Put that apart!" (Letters of that description were sent indifferently either to Bucholc or to Knoll.)

"Look out, Kundel!" he cried suddenly, striking out with his stick behind him. He had heard a letter fall upon the floor; it was picked up, and Bucholc went on with his brief, trenchant orders.

The servant had scarce time to catch the letters as they flew, and to fling them down, each into an open box with a label corresponding to its description. They all went down by separate tubes into Bucholc's private bureau, where they were taken and distributed at once.

"Now for our little diversion!" he cried, having nothing more to throw, and only letters of various shapes and colours remaining on his lap.

Charles opened the first letter, in a lady's pretty hand-writing. The envelope was quite plain, but bore a monogram, and smelt of violets.

Boroviecki demurred, fearing to be indiscreet. "Read, read!" Bucholc commanded.

"Most honourable Mr. President,

"Encouraged by the respect and reverence with which all poor unhappy people utter your name, I venture to apply to you; and all the more boldly, because I am sure that you will not leave my petition unanswered, since you never know of the misfortunes of your fellow men, or the tears and woes of orphans, without granting them your aid and assistance. Your kindness of heart is known, and known throughout the country. God knows well of whom to make millionaires!"

"That will do," Bucholc interrupted. "I am bored. Tell me what she wants."

Boroviecki looked quickly through the rest of the epistle, written all through in the same lachrymose unnatural style, and summed up: "A loan of a thousand roubles to start a shop."

"Into the fire with it!" was Bucholc's curt command. "Now for another."

This one was a most careful specimen of penmanship, by the widow of an official. She had six children and a pension of five hundred roubles a year, and applied to him for leave to sell the factory remnants on commission, which would enable her to bring up her children as honest citizens.

"Into the fire! Much harm will it do me if they all turn out thieves!"

Then came the letter of a certain nobleman, not very well spelt, and written on paper that smelt of herrings and of beer. It had probably been penned at a small restaurant in some country town, and reminded Bucholc that they had met years ago, and how on that occasion he had sold Bucholc a couple of horses. . . .

"Blind, both of them!—I know the fellow; he writes to me every year, when pay-day comes round in April.—Read no more, I know what's coming. He wants money, and swears a nobleman ought to help a nobleman! The noodle! Into the fire with it!"

And so the letters went on; some from widows, with or without children, or women with sick husbands or mothers; some from orphans, from men injured in the factory or asking for work; or from technicians, engineers and inventors of all kinds, who promised him to revolutionize the cotton industry, and meanwhile asked for a loan to work out their ideas and improve their models. There was even a love-letter—the effusion of a person he once had known, who in her present state of penury still remembered the bliss that had once been hers.

"Burn it! burn it!" he called out, shrieking with laughter, and refusing even to listen to the pathos of her high-flown

phrases, which ended with a request for a loan. "See how they care for me, all of them! All of them after my roubles!"

But there were letters, too, full of the most outrageous invectives.

"Oh, read how they lampoon me! I like these: they at least are frank, and often more entertaining than the others."

Charles read out one that began: "You leader of all the bandits of Lodz!" and went through a long litany of curses, of which the mildest were: "German swine, thief, villain, leech, dirty dog, potato-stealer!" It wound up with: "If God's vengeance fails to overtake you, that of man will not fail, tyrannical hound that you are!" There was no signature.

"Why, he's quite amusing. Ha ha! A funny brute!"

"I say, Mr. President, it's too much for me; it makes me sick."

"Read on; drink at this trough of human spleen; it will sober you down a little, and it all is part of the psychology of Lodz."

Charles gazed at him with eyes in which anger and hatred were beginning to dart forth livid flames. But he went on reading; this time, an accusation of dishonesty, brought against the head warehouseman.

"Give it me; I must go into this." And he pocketed the missive.

There were complaints against foremen besides, and threatening letters from workmen who had been discharged, and denunciations pencilled on bits of packing-paper and informing Bucholc that someone in the factory had called him "an old cutpurse" or "a pig with red-rimmed eyes."

"Hand me that; it's an important document. I like to know what people say of me"; and he laughed with hearty contempt.

"Do you think I read them every day, as now? Ha ha! Augustus lights the fire with them, and I get thus much profit out of the trouble they take."

"For all that, sir, you give several thousands every year to public charities."

"So I do, so I do, or they would have them out of me by

force. Yes, for the sake of peace, I throw a bone to a dog now and then."

"The old adage," said Charles, "*'Noblesse oblige!'* is now changed to 'Millions oblige!'"

"A very stupid nihilistic adage it is! What do I care if men starve? Some people must belong to the Have-Nothing class. Nobody ever gave me a groschen. I had to earn and keep what I got hold of, all by myself. Why and wherefore should I give anything to anybody? Who can prove that it is my duty? Let those gentlemen who have squandered their estates go to the devil! You all here want to *have*, but none of you to *work*. Any one of you might have gone to Lodz as I have done, and worked, and made his fortune, like me. Why didn't you? Because you then were all agog for your revolution. Ha ha! You Don Quixotes, you!" And he spat out scornfully (though dirtying himself in the act) and laughed and cackled with intense enjoyment.

Charles walked about the room, resolved not to speak a word; though every instant more and more indignant, he held his peace and feigned to be unconcerned, conscious he could not convince Bucholc, and unwilling to offend him.

Bucholc, aware he was annoying Boroviecki, for that very reason said all the most spiteful things he could, torturing him on purpose. That was a joy to him, and he felt a special relish when he could torment anyone, and "void his rheum" upon a human soul.

He lay, stretched out almost at full length in his easy-chair, with legs nearly scorched by the fire, which he was unceasingly poking with his stick to make it blaze; and with that greyish-yellow old face of his, like that of a decaying corpse, but out of which his red eyes glared with sneering malice. His round head, with the few wisps of grey hair that yet remained, stood out still more strongly on the dark ground of the arm-chair.

He scarcely ceased from speaking for an instant, mocking and reviling everything with increasing violence. He had all the seeming of an idol, swathed in tattered raiments, reposing upon his millions in the sanctuary of this his temple, scoffing

at all that was not Might, sneering at every emotion, and even despising humanity itself, when not backed by the power of millions.

The servant came in at last to announce dinner ready, and interrupt his flow of speech. Two men carried him out in his arm-chair and into the dining-room, situated at the other end of the flat.

"You are a good listener, you are no fool!" he said to Charles, walking beside him.

"What I heard was all extremely interesting, and I have been much entertained by it, as affording material for the pathological study of millionaires," he answered seriously, looking Bucholc full in the face.

"Mr. —— Don't tilt me over so, you!" he yelled to the servant who carried his chair on one side; —"Mr. Borowiecki, I respect you a great deal; shake hands. We understand each other, and can hit it well off together. You may rely on me!"

Mrs. Bucholc had come to the dining-room before them. When they placed her husband at the table, she kissed him on the head, at the same time giving him her hand to kiss, and sat down at the other end.

The doctor was there also; he came up to Charles and introduced himself.

"Hamerstein.—Dr. Julius Gustavus Hamerstein," he added emphatically, stroking his long, tow-coloured beard, which went half down to his waist.

"Doctor of homœopathy and vegetarianism," said Bucholc—"that fellow costs me four thousand roubles a year; smokes my very dearest cigars, and promises either to kill or to cure me."

The doctor would have qualified this assertion but for Mrs. Bucholc's asking them in a very low voice to sit down to dinner, which a footman was just bringing in.

The conversation was carried on in German.

"Are you not a vegetarian?" Hamerstein inquired, poking his beard out from the napkin that enveloped it.

"Why, no. I am in full possession of all my faculties," was

Boroviecki's flippant reply. The man's appearance, flabby, paunchy, with a big face and an enormous bald head that shone like a newly cleaned saucepan, was singularly distasteful to him.

Hamerstein, with a gesture of impatience and an offended manner, eyed him through convex blue spectacles and answered stiffly: "No truth but is ridiculed at the outset."

"Are your adherents many in Lodz?"

"Only himself and my dogs; they have the mange, and the veterinarian has forbidden them meat," Bucholc said jeeringly, although he had himself nothing for dinner but oatmeal porridge, boiled with milk.

"I have written a treatise on vegetarianism, entitled *Natural Diet,* which I can send you."

"Thanks. I shall read it with curiosity, but doubt much whether you will make a convert of me."

"So at first said Mr. President too; and now——"

"And now you're a fool, my good Doctor," said Bucholc, "not to realize that when a man is ill, and all the medical faculty can do him no good, he's ready to try any quack doctor, any Father Kneipp, and even your electro-homœopathico-arsenico-vegetarian treatment."

"Because it alone is efficacious; because the homœopathical principle, *Similia similibus curantur,* is most perfectly adapted to man's nature and its method the only true one; as Mr. President here is experiencing very strikingly in his own person."

"So far, yes; but if I get worse, Doctor, be sure you'll get a thrashing and be flung downstairs with all your humbugging medicines."

"Whosoever brings new truths to the world must suffer martyrdom for them," the doctor replied sententiously.

"Martyrdom—fiddlesticks! Martyred at the rate of four thousand a year indeed! Martyred, with your fat face shining bright as a lantern!" The doctor raised his spectacled eyes to the ceiling, as calling it to witness his sufferings—and went on eating his oatmeal porridge. There stood before him a dish of salad with olive-oil, and one of potatoes.

The room was in silence. Noiseless servants flitted hither and thither like shadows, attentive to serve the company. One of them, on guard behind Bucholc's chair, at once gave him anything he indicated with a look.

"Kundel!" Bucholc would snarl at him, if he was slow or made any mistake.

Mrs. Bucholc, who sat at the other side of the table, took no part whatever in the conversation, such as it was. She ate most deliberately, chewing with her front teeth. Her smile was that of a waxen mask with pallid lips, and she gazed with glassy eyes on Boroviecki. Now and then she would set her lace cap straight on her grey hair, combed smooth over her yellow shrivelled forehead with sunken temples; or, with her sallow little wrinkled hand, fondle the parrot on the arm of her chair, looking for all the world like a mere bundle of multifarious colours. When she required anything, she would beckon to a servant, and either point to it, or whisper inaudible words. There she sat, not unlike a mummy; nothing that denoted life remained in her, except a few automatic motions.

The dinner was very simple, and—after the German fashion—consisted of little meat and plenty of vegetables. The table service, too, was poor: plate very much worn, chipped and damaged china, with doves painted round the borders.

There was cognac, but only for Boroviecki; wines there were, too, of several sorts, which Bucholc poured out for him, saying: "'Tis good wine, Mr. Boroviecki; drink it."

The dinner dragged on to its end in dreary taciturnity. It was a most oppressive silence. At times the parrot, disappointed in its expectation of food, would cry: "Kundel!" or Bucholc would mutter the same word to the servant. And every word, every sound, reverberated through the vast apartment, where a couple of hundred people might have found room enough—a room furnished with chairs and sideboards carved in Old German style.

The great Venetian window, that looked out upon factory walls, gave but scant light, and only on that part of the table

where they sat; the rest was plunged in murky brown shadow, out of which now and again footmen emerged in black livery. But the sun came to shine in at the corner of the window, and cast over half the table a streak of that reddish light which precedes sundown.

"Draw the curtains!" Bucholc cried; he objected to sunbeams, and felt much pleasure when the girandole with electric burners was lit.

At length, to the great relief of Charles, whom the silence and dreariness of the meal had almost put to sleep, the dinner came to an end. Old Mrs. Bucholc, as before, mechanically kissed the top of Bucholc's head, held out her hand for him, and then for Boroviecki to kiss, and went away. Charles, too, did not stay long, but after exchanging a few words with the doctor, left the place without waking his sleeping host. Save for Bucholc, who slept, and for a footman standing a few paces off, watchful and ready, the dining-room was empty.

Charles, once out in the street, the fresh air, and the bright sunlight, drew a long breath of relief. Bucholc's carriage was in waiting, but he sent it away, and preferred to walk, passing the factories and turning off from Piotrovska into an unpaved lane, that led out of town, and had along one side of it several big sombre tenements for workmen.

The view there was dismal and forbidding. Great two-storeyed stone barracks, entirely bare of any adornment, with red walls of miserable bricks that crumbled away in the wind, looked out upon a muddy, evil-smelling lane. Hundreds of small casements, in which a white curtain or some pots of flowers were at rare intervals to be seen, faced the massive bulks of the factories, straggling away on the other side of the lane. These all stood beyond a high fence and a row of tall poplars with withered branches and the aspect of a skeleton guard, separating those workmen's dwellings—catacombs of the living, so to speak—from the factories which, in the sabbath stillness, rose up noiseless and mute, but mighty in their greatness; basking like monsters in the

still sunshine, and reflecting the light from innumerable windows.

Boroviecki pushed on past those tenements, following his way over narrow foot-bridges and stepping-stones at times completely covered by the liquid mud that in places ran splashing like water, even to the ground-floor windows and on the doors opening on passages and corridors echoing with the cries and shouts and screams of children.

Having passed the tenements, he entered a long, narrow garden, that was separated by this lane from a wide expanse of open country in which scattered dwelling-houses and factory buildings were visible in the distance. From the plain there blew a cold damp wind rustling in the leaves of the hornbeam fences; at every gust the leaves, withered and dead, fell whirling down on to the soft black paths of the tiny garden. A tall one-storeyed house, inhabited by his fellow worker Murray, rose there. In that same house there was the dwelling assigned to Boroviecki by the factory: the whole of the first storey or of the ground-floor at his choice. But the place of abode was so very depressing that he felt an invincible dislike for it.

From the windows on one side you had a view of the workmen's courtyards: the front view showed the garden and the factories beyond. To the left it was the same thing: the last street on the outskirts, unpaved and with ditches several yards deep on either side, overhung by drooping trees of great age and about to die, being watered by the refuse of the neighbouring factories. Beyond these there was the sight of a great tract of waste land, full of holes, of stagnant ponds, of cesspools, tinted with the dyes that flowed from bleacheries and printing-rooms; of piles of rubbish, and dust-heaps dumped down there from the town, bricks from stoves taken to pieces, standing clumps of dead trees, traces of what had once been fields, masses of clay deposited there since the autumn before, huts made of boards roughly nailed together; and, close to the distant forest, a few tiny factories; which, with their crude red tints and their coarse, harsh outlines, were nothing less than an eyesore.

Such a Lodzian landscape simply could not be borne. So Charles had preferred to dwell in town in hired and not very convenient lodgings: but there he lived with friends, united to him not so much by real affection as by long acquaintance and an intimacy of many years.

Boroviecki was a chemical specialist in colours, Baum knew all about weaving and spinning, and Welt had gone through a complete course of commercial studies. The three were known in Lodz by various nicknames: some called them "Welt and the two B's"; others, "Baum and Co.," and others, "the Lodzian triplets."

Murray came out into the garden to greet Charles, and from a distance set to wiping his hands, always in perspiration, with a handkerchief no smaller than a napkin.

"I feared you would not come at all."

"Did I not promise?"

"There is a young Warsaw fellow at my lodgings; he has not been long here."

"What is he?" Charles asked, not much interested, taking off his overcoat in the lobby, hung to the very ceiling with engravings, chiefly of nude women.

"A business man. Wants to start an agency."

"The devil he does! Out of ten men you meet in the street, six have just come to found an agency, and nine to make a fortune."

Kozlovski, the man in question, rose nonchalantly to greet them from the sofa where he lolled, and then fell heavily back. He was drinking cup after cup of the tea Murray poured out for him.

The conversation soon became lively; Murray had been early in town and now told them all the news about the late bankruptcies and their results.

"A score of firms will fail; how far the bankruptcies are fraudulent or *bona fide*, we shall know later, Wolkman is shaky at any rate. Grosman, Grünspan's son-in-law, is considering what to do. Frishman, they say, had been waiting for just such an opportunity, and went down in a hurry; he was afraid before lest they should prevent him; his married

daughter's dowry is still due, and he had to make money. Travinski is said to be rushing from bank to bank; there's something wrong there.—You know him, Mr. Boroviecki."

"I was his fellow student in Riga."

"I say," Kozlovski exclaimed, stirring his tea, "this place is a very Sodom and Gomorrah."

"Mr. Robert," said Charles, not desirous of Kozlovski's opinion about Lodz, "I came here to see your new furniture; please show it to me."

They went to the opposite side of Murray's apartments.

"Why, this is indeed a storehouse of beauty," Charles cried, astounded.

"Pretty, isn't it?" Murray answered, proud and delighted to hear this praise; and when he had shown Charles everything, his pale eyes were beaming, and his mouth smiled from ear to ear.

There was a parlour elegantly appointed, and full of furniture upholstered in yellow, standing on a pale violet carpet, and hung with *portières*, yellow likewise.

"A fine combination of colours!" Charles cried, enjoying the effect of their harmonious blending.

"It's really nice, is it not?" Murray exclaimed, enraptured, and wiping more than once those hands of his that were to touch the curtains. His poor hunch was shaking and raising his coat, which he kept pulling down. "And this," he whispered with awe, "this will be Her room, Her boudoir!" ushering Charles into a tiny room, with tiny pieces of furniture and plenty of china bric-à-brac. At the window, there was a gilt flower-stand, laden with a number of hyacinth flowers of various colours and in full bloom.

"Why, you have not forgotten a single thing!"

"Because my mind is full of the matter," he said very decidedly, wiped his hands, pulled down his coat, and poked his long, bony nose in among the flowers, to inhale their fragrance.

At last he came to the bedchamber, and a small backroom. Each was well, perfectly well, fitted up, and upholstered with the greatest luxury. Anyone could see therein the

work of an expert in such matters, as well as that of a man greatly in love with his wife that was to be.

Returning to the parlour, Charles sat down, eyeing Murray with admiration. "One can see how deeply in love you are," he observed.

"Oh, I am—I am! If you knew how I am always thinking of her——!"

"And she of you?"

"Hush! There are subjects—too sacred—better not talk," he returned hastily, taken aback at the question. To conceal his confusion, he set to brush off a sofa some dust that was not there.

Charles said nothing, but lit a cigarette, and presently, feeling drowsy, ensconced himself in an arm-chair and smoked; and now let his eyelids droop, and now gazed out of the window up into the amethyst sky, with the dark factory chimneys at the horizon. He was in a fit of slumberous taciturnity.

So was Murray. He wiped his hands, pulled down his coat, stroked and pressed his massive clean-shaven jaw, and then riveted his gaze on the pattern of pale marguerites in the centre of the carpet.

Boroviecki, striving to keep awake, reached out for and again lit a cigarette; but his hand fell like lead on the arm of his chair.

Murray was dreaming of the bliss to come, and living on the hope of wedlock in the future. His gentle, almost womanly soul was wandering among the thousand gim-cracks and trifles that filled the apartment, and enjoying in advance the pleasure his wife to be would derive from them. He felt like talking, but seeing Boroviecki sound asleep, and unwilling to disturb him, as well as weary of sitting there, he let the blind down, took the still burning cigarette out of Charles's hand, and went out on tiptoe.

Kozlovski was singing and strumming the piano.

"Will you sing me a love-song—a very, very passionate one, burning with love? I'll pour you out some more tea," said the Englishman.

"From what operetta?"

"Oh, no matter; I am fond of songs of very passionate love, and of those only."

Kozlovski very willingly began singing some melodies that were at the time favourites in Warsaw.

"I don't mean that sort of thing," Murray said; "I do not know your language well enough to explain—but I should like something most sweet and most beautiful.—What you sang just now was common, vulgar——"

"Pardon me; I have sung them in the best *salons* in Warsaw!"

"I expressed myself badly. They are pretty, but—please sing something else."

Kozlovski proceeded to hum under his breath some bits from his inexhaustible store—songs by Tosti. All those he knew he sang with indefatigable zest; his faint tenor voice, intentionally softened, yet with a metallic ring in it, was melody itself.

Murray, quite entranced, forgot all and everything: forgot to pour out the tea, forgot to wipe his hands, to pull down his coat. He only listened, and with all his soul, to those ditties, now sweet and passionate and full of fire, now breathing the profoundest melancholy. With all his being he listened, his eyes filling with tears of ecstasy, and his ape-like features agitated with strong emotion.

CHAPTER VI

MORITZ WELT had, as Matthew told Boroviecki, left home at about eleven, creeping rather than walking along the sunlit street. So taken up was he with certain financial combinations that he even failed to notice acquaintances bowing to him on the way; and he viewed both thoroughfares and passers-by with his eyes only, not with his mind.

"How shall I—how can I—work it out?" he said, his thoughts ever coming back to the same point.

The sun shone bright over Lodz and its thousand chimneys. These now stood erect, in the hush of the day of rest, high in the air, at present clear and undefiled by smoke—red-brown pillars, like gigantic pine-trunks, with the azure of heaven and the air of spring all round them.

Multitudes of workmen, dressed up in bright-coloured Sunday clothes, with very glaring neckties, or tall hats of a fashion long out of date, and with umbrellas in their hands, came flooding Piotrovska Street, pouring into it in long lines from cross-roads and by-ways, jostling one another with the ponderous heaves of crowds that passively take and give every impact and every push. Working-women, too, arrayed in hats of astonishingly gaudy hues, in gowns well cut to their figures, in short bright-coloured capes; or (some of them) checked shawls over their shoulders, and hair neatly combed out and smooth, glistening with pomade and gold hairpins, and even in certain cases adorned with an artificial flower or two. These tripped along leisurely, elbowing their way through the crowd, and by this means often warding off injury to their stiffly starched dresses, or to the sunshades, held open above their heads, which like gay butterflies of

many a colour, fluttered over the grey ever-flowing stream of humanity, constantly growing, as it rolled on, with the affluents from the side streets.

They raised their eyes sunwards, and inhaled the sweet breath of spring in the air, yet walked on with dull, plodding steps, ill at ease in their holiday clothing, confused by the relative stillness of the streets, and by that very freedom of the Sunday rest, with which they did not know what to do; they walked on with dazed, staring eyes, dimmed by the splendour which shone down on them, and in whose blaze that multitude of faces—chalk-white, sallow, leaden-coloured, clay-coloured, wizened, and bereft of blood—blood sucked out of them by the factory—looked more miserable still. If they stopped, it was to look at the shop-fronts, gay with shoddy clothing; or else they made in Indian file for the tavern.

From roofs, from gutters out of repair, from balconies, streams of water poured down on the heads of those below, and on the muddied side-walks. The snow which had fallen the previous day was melting, running down the façades both of mansions and of common dwellings, painting long, black streaks upon those walls, dingy with coal-dust and with soot.

The pavement, abounding in holes and cracks, was coated with viscid mud, splashed from the carriages and cabs on to the side-ways and the people walking there.

Further, on both sides of the street there rose serried ranks of houses of every description: palaces in the Italian style, used as cotton warehouses; common blocks of building, foursquare, three-storeyed, provided neither with plaster nor with rough-cast; magnificent houses—baroque balconies of gilt iron, wrought in undulating curves, wanton with Cupids beneath the friezes and under the windows—through which you could see a row of weavers' looms. Then there were tiny houses of wood, all awry, with green moss-grown roofs; and in the courtyard behind them rose tall chimneys and factory buildings, beside a palace in the ponderous Berlin-Renaissance style: red moulded brick door-posts and lintels

of stone, and great bas-reliefs along the frontage (allegories of Commerce), and two turreted pavilions on either side, separated from the main building by a splendid iron grating, in the rear of which stood the colossal walls of some factory. There were houses, in size and grandeur vying with museums—warehouses for stuffs finished. Some were overcharged with ornaments in various styles: Renaissance caryatids on the ground-floor, sustaining a gallery in Old German style above; while the second storey, *à la* Louis XV, smiled down upon all this with wavy lines about the window-frames; the whole topped by a bulging frontage, embellished with something like cotton reels. And others again rose with lofty walls, adorned with majestic severity, like a temple to some god; and upon these were fixed marble tablets, with names engraved thereon: Shaya Mendelsohn, Herman Bucholc, etc.

The place was a hotch-potch, a Babel of all styles of architecture, jumbled together by the mason's art; bristling with turrets, plastered over with stucco decorations constantly peeling off, pierced with innumerable casements, and abounding in stone balconies, in caryatids on the so-called ornamental fronts, in balustrades upon roofs, in grand doorways where liveried janitors slumbered in velvet-covered easy-chairs, in mean doorways through which the street mire dribbled into horrible yards, as foul as dung-heaps; in stores and offices, in warehouses and poor shops and booths full of dirt and shoddy; in first-class hotels and restaurants; in the most loathsome dens, outside of which groups of wretched beings were basking in the sun; in Opulence, rolling along the street in gorgeous carriages, drawn by the best American fast trotters, at ten thousand roubles apiece; and in Destitution, slouching through the same street, with livid, desperate mouth, and the sharp-set ravenous eyes of eternal hunger!

"A marvellous town," Moritz thought, stopping at the corner of Meyer's Passage, and gazing with half-closed eyelids on the interminable lines of houses, jutting forward upon the street. "Oh, a marvellous town!" he repeated, adding in

self-mockery, "But where do I come in for it?" as he strolled to a coffee-house, almost full already.

"Coffee here!" he called out to the waiters rushing about in every direction, found an empty seat, looked mechanically through the *Berliner Börsen Courier,* and then again fell to musing about, first, where he could get money from; and then how to get the most he could out of the contract made with his two friends.

Moritz was a Lodzian shark to the backbone, and so could feel no twinge of conscience preventing him from doing a good stroke of business, even at the expense of his friends, provided this "good stroke" could be made without any trouble to himself. He lived in a world where cheating, fraudulent bankruptcy, and every kind of swindling and peculation were the order of the day. All that they swallowed greedily, for it was their food; they related clever tricks of knaves with real envy; anecdotes, better and better still, were told and repeated about the coffee-houses and taverns and places of business; public frauds were held up to admiration, and millions—no matter where they came from—were looked upon with reverence and with awe. Whether a man had earned or stolen those millions mattered not one jot to anybody, provided he had them. Bunglers and men who had no luck were jeered at and severely judged; they could get no credit, and were distrusted everywhere. But a successful man had the world at his feet. He might, on a given day, go into bankruptcy, and pay twenty-five roubles in the hundred; the next day the very men he had swindled would offer him still more credit than before: they meant to make up their losses by a bankruptcy of fifteen per hundred!

Moritz was considering how to profit by his partnership, and how to make other profits independently.

"To buy something for our company, but only to make a show—and buy on my own account as much as I can!"—The idea had been present to him all the forenoon. He jotted down columns of figures on the marble table he was sitting at, crossed them off, rubbed them out, and wrote again indefatigably, indifferent to what was going on round him.

From between the heads of two men opposite him at the same table a hand was thrust forth to him, which he grasped, though he could not perceive its owner.

"Morning!" he answered to the other's greeting, and returned to work out the most impossible calculations.

He could find neither money, nor means to get any. By founding his agency he had exhausted what credit he had. More he could not possibly obtain, unless his note of hand was backed by a good signature. "And who would be my surety?" he thought.

"Coffee!" he again called out to the waiters who, amid the noise and confusion that filled the coffee-house, were going about with trays of coffee and tea, held over their heads.

A cuckoo-clock struck one. People were beginning to leave now: it was the best time for a walk. Moritz still remained seated. He passed his fingers through his handsome beard, soft as velvet, and fixed his glasses firmly on his nose. His eyes flashed.

Old Grünspan—Grünspan, owner of a factory of woollen scarves, firm Grünspan & Lansberg, and a near relative, being his maternal uncle—had occurred to him. He resolved to see the man, to get his signature if he could, and if not, to take him as a partner.

His joyful delight at having found someone did not last long, however. For it also occurred to him that this Grünspan had ruined his own brother and compounded with his creditors time and again. It was by no means safe to do business with such a fellow.

"A trickster and a cheat!" he muttered sulkily, feeling that such a signature would be worthless. Still he resolved to try.

Looking round the coffee-room, a long, dark chamber, now almost empty, save for a dozen or so of youngsters, attentively reading the papers: "Mr. Rubinroth!" he called out to a young man who, sitting under a looking-glass, and holding a glass in one hand and a cake in the other, was perusing a newspaper spread out before him.

"Here you are, sir!" cried Rubinroth, springing to his feet.

"Anything particular?"

"Nothing whatever, sir."

"You should have reported this morning."

"Well, sir, as there was nothing to report, I thought——"

"You are to do as you're bid, not think; that's none of your business. I told you once for all to report to my lodgings every morning. News or no news—that does not concern you. You are paid to report, and must do so. You could surely have got here in good time for your cake and newspaper."

Rubinroth was loud in self-justification.

"Don't raise your voice; we're not in a synagogue," he said tartly to his employee, and hurried out into the street.

The sun was shining warmer and brighter than ever. The crowds of workers were there no longer; others had taken their place on the side-walks: well-dressed people, ladies in fashionable hats and costly mantles, men in black overcoats and ulsters, Jews wearing long frock-coats bespattered with mud, and Jewesses—pretty for the most part—in velvet gowns that trailed on the miry pavement. It was a noisy scene. There was a good deal of pushing and jostling as they went their way; and of laughing, too.

Outside the pastry-cook's at a street corner there stood a group of juvenile office clerks, staring at the array of women who passed, and making remarks aloud, rather foolish than pleasant, and every now and then bursting into a horse-laugh; for Leo Cohn was present, standing by, making his usual jests, at which he laughed more loudly than all the rest.

"Ah, Moritz, come round to us!" Leo shouted on seeing Welt.

"Let me be! I don't care for fools in the streets," he said with a growl, and passed on, disappearing in the throngs about the New Market-place.

The numerous scaffoldings in front of the houses either newly building or under repair forced everybody to leave the side-walks and trudge through the mud.

Beyond this New Market-place there were Jews and working people all about, making for the Old Town.

And here the mud was growing blacker and more liquid, and the side-walks differed in front of every house. In one place they were broad and paved with flagstones; in another they ran along in thin strips of asphalt trodden by many feet; or they changed into tiny stones, nestling in mud, sharp and painful underfoot. Sometimes waste products and factory refuse came pouring down in dirty streamlets, reddish or bluish or yellowish; and the flow of offscourings from the houses and the factories behind them was so abundant that they brimmed over the kennels, which were neither wide nor deep, and deluged the foot-paths with a many-coloured flood —even to the much-trodden thresholds of the wretched little shops. And out of these came, from mire-befouled and dingy recesses, a mingled stench of filth and putridity, and the strong odours of herrings, rotting vegetables, or spirits.

These grimy old dilapidated hovels, with the plaster peeling off and showing the bare red brickwork, like open wounds, were sometimes built of wood, or with so-called "Prussian walls"—bricks set in timber frames—that were giving way and going to pieces about the doors and windows, with frames all awry and sagging—hideous carcasses of dwellings. At other spots, there had grown up enormous buildings with multitudinous windows: unplastered as yet, without balconies and having only makeshift windows, but swarming with humanity, and loud with the clatter of work in spite of the day of rest; with the whirring of many looms, busily preparing shoddy goods to export to Russia, and with the shrill grinding sound of spinning-machines winding yarn on spools for hand looms.

In front of these endless rows of houses, red with their sombre walls of brick, and towering above those other masses of rank decay—hideous wrecks of petty trade and of the tradesmen's lives—there stood lofty piles of bricks and of timber, narrowing the street, already far too narrow, filled with carts, horses, goods for transport, tumult, the loud bawling of tradespeople, and the many voices of workmen going

on to the Old Town. These plodded on, either in mid-street, or about the side foot-paths, the bright hues of the mufflers they wore round their necks giving some touch of colour to the general tones of the street—grey, sad, dull, sombre.

The Old Town and all the streets that led to it were lively with the usual Sunday animation.

In the Grand Square—surrounded by tall and ancient houses that never had undergone restoration, and were now filled with shops, taverns, and what are named beer-halls—there had been set up a great number of unsightly booths and sheds; and round about these thousands of people were thronged together—talking, screaming, cursing—and now and then fighting. A chaotic tumult rolled in billows of sound from side to side of the square, over that great swarm of human heads, of dishevelled locks, of uplifted hands, of horses' manes, of butchers' axes gleaming on a sudden in the sunlight over the meat they were going to chop; of fabulous-sized loaves, carried on the head because of the throng; of the kerchiefs—yellow, green, red, violet—waving like flags above booths of wearing-apparel, caps, hats, and boots, seen hanging on pegs; and of the woollen mufflers that flapped in the wind and flicked the faces of such as came too near.

This uproar resounded everywhere: amongst the tin utensils, glittering in the sunlight; amongst the piles of fat bacon, and the many pyramids of oranges on the hucksters' stalls, so strongly and brightly contrasting with the dark colours of the men's garb—and with the mud—the mud which, trod underfoot, and trampled and churned ropy and slabby, splashed and spirted over the stalls and over men's faces, and poured along, out of the square into the kennels, and thence to the streets at the four corners. Along these there slowly rolled huge drays, laden with barrels of beer; butchers' carts, covered with filthy cloths, or displaying afar the red and yellow flesh of flayed oxen; carts piled high with sacks of flour, and others crowded with poultry cackling volubly, or quacking ducks, or geese putting their heads out through the ladder sides of the carts and hissing at the pedestrians.

Occasionally, beside these endless lines of successive carts, some elegant equipage would come dashing past, bespattering people and carts, and the side-walks on which wretchedly poor old Jewesses were squatting, with their baskets filled with boiled beans, sweets, frozen apples, and children's toys.

In front of the shops, wide open and replete with customers, there had been placed tables, chairs, and benches, on which were displayed stockings, socks, artificial flowers, percale goods as stiff as cardboard, gaudy coverlets, and articles of cotton lace. At one corner of the square was a collection of yellow-painted bedsteads, of chiffoniers that would not close, brown-tinted to imitate mahogany; of faded mirrors, in which no one could see his face, but quite brilliant in the sunbeams; there were rocking-cradles, there were kitchen utensils as well, and close beyond them, sitting out of the mud on bundles of straw, were countrywomen in striped scarlet petticoats and girdles, selling butter and milk.

And between the carts and the hucksters' stalls, forcing their way through the mob, women came with large baskets full of white starched caps, that they tried on customers in the open street. In Crossway Street, close by the Marketplace, there stood tables covered with women's hats, whose paltry flowers, rusty buckles, and dyed variegated feathers were seen on the background of the walls behind to tremble sadly in the wind. Men's outfits were likewise sold there, and tried on, either in the open streets, or in doorways or behind screens that in general did not screen at all. The workingwomen tried on jackets, aprons, nay, petticoats, with as little concealment.

The hubbub went on increasing, for fresh streams of purchasers were continually pouring in from the New Town, and the hullabaloo of husky voices swelled higher, mingled with the prevailing din of squeaking toy trumpets, squealing sucking-pigs, and clamorous geese; the seething cacophony of all these sounds combined rose into the clear sunny sky, which stretched out its azure blue canopy above them.

They were dancing to music in one of the taverns, and so

this hellish racket was at intervals relieved by the concertinas and violins striking up an Oberek dance, and by the stentorian shouts of the dancers. But presently these too were lost in the uproar of a free-for-all fight in the midst of the Market-place, close to the pork-butchers' stalls. Near a score of struggling men—a dense mass of legs and arms enlaced and entwined in fierce conflict, swayed to and fro, with whoops and yells, bellowing and howling, till they all toppled down together by the stalls into the mire, where they still fought and bit, striking and kicking lustily, with bleeding faces and arms and legs, roaring throats and rolling, furious eyes.

Upon all this the sun was shining, and flooding the whole place with torrents of warm light. It gave richness to the colours, touched with its gold those tired and miserable faces, smiled on the ruins, kindled glorious fires in the window-panes, the thin watery mud, and the eyes of those who stood basking in its glory before their doors; it gilded with beauty the ugliness which prevailed there, all things and all men, and it threw a glamour even into the voices which arose from booths and stalls and miry places, billowing round the market in mighty waves, rebounding from the house-corners and echoing down the side streets till they reached the factories in the near distance. And these stood raising skyward their tall chimneys, pregnant with silent menace; and from the windows—those eyes of theirs, bright in the sunbeams—they stared down upon the swarming multitudes of working-men.

Moritz pushed through the Market-place with great disgust, and went down Drevnoska Street, one of the most ancient in Lodz, and very quiet. It consisted of the cottages, now in decay, of the first Lodz weavers. Amid these there were still a few peasants' cabins, with loosened corner-stones; they stood, leaning askew, and partly fallen in, surrounded with small gardens, wherein some old cherry- and pear-trees planted close together were slowly dying. There had been a time when they had flourished and borne fruit; but since many a year, with the overshadowing factory walls on every

side, and the correspondingly and constantly greater difficulty in getting sunshine, open space, and fresh breezes, these trees—poisoned besides by the waste products of the dyeing-works that filtered into the gardens—were doomed to decay and oblivion, perishing slowly in melancholy and tragical abandonment.

In this street, too, there was mud more than ankle-deep. And further, at the very end, terminating in fields, some pigs were running loose in front of the cabins, rooting and nuzzling in the hardened soil where rubbish had been dumped down.

The cottages were scattered about in disorder—here in groups, there standing detached about the fields, on a soft boggy soil. It was here that the factory of Grünspan & Lansberg stood, separated by a strong railing from the street.

A large, one-storeyed house rose beside the factory.

"Is your master in, Francis?" Moritz inquired of the old workman who opened the door.

"He is."

"Anybody else?"

"They are all here."

"All? Who?"

"The whole gang," the man rapped out in a tone of contempt.

"It's lucky, Francis, that I'm in a good humour to-day, or I'd spoil your face for you. Do you understand?—Pull off my galoshes!"

"Oh, I understand. I was to have my face smashed, but as Your Honour is in a good humour, there'll be no smashing," the man replied with perfect simplicity, pulling the galoshes off.

"Good. Remember that, and get yourself a nip of vodka," said Moritz, quite appeased, and giving him a five-kopek piece.

But as he went in, the other spat after him, muttering: "Smash my face? The scurvy carrion!"

Moritz entered a large chamber, where about ten people were sitting round a big table. They had just done dinner,

for the table was not yet cleared. He silently shook hands with them all, then took a seat on a sofa in a corner, overshadowed by a fan palm.

"Why bicker so? We may as well talk things over quietly," said Grünspan, who was walking about the room with a velvet cap on his grizzled head.

A long beard fringed his round white face; his eyes were darting to and fro constantly and swiftly. In his hand, on which a signet-ring gleamed, he held a cigar, at which he puffed but seldom, puckering his full, red lips, and inhaling the smoke judiciously.

"Francis?" he called to the servant outside; "go to my study, and fetch a box of cigars that are moist. And, Francis, mind: this one is not to be lost; I am putting it on the stove."

"What's all the row about?" Moritz asked of Felix Fishbin, who was also one of the family, and now seated in a rocking-chair, rocking up and down amid clouds of smoke.

"A grand family 'playta' * feast!" he returned.

"I sent to Father to get his advice, and asked you all to come and tell my husband—for he won't listen to me!—that if he goes on doing business the way he does, we are ruined root and branch!" Thus, in great excitement, spoke an elegant and handsome young brunette in a sable-coloured hat, who was Mrs. Grosman, Grünspan's eldest daughter.

"How much does Lihacheff owe you?" Grünspan asked.

"Fifteen thousand roubles," Grosman replied.

"Where are the bills of exchange?"

"Where are they? All over Lodz they are.—I paid Grosglik with some, then I paid for goods, and Kolinski for the new building. What's the use of talking? Lihacheff has come a cropper; they will be returned to me, and I shall have to meet them; they were backed with my own signature."

"Do you hear that, Father?" screamed Mrs. Grosman. "And that's how he always goes on. What—what on earth does he mean? Is this business? Call him a business man?

* *Playta*—a Yiddish expression, meaning "bankruptcy."—*Translator's Note.*

No: he's an honest dealer, who tells us all: 'I am bound to pay what I owe!' None but a stupid boor who knows nothing of business can speak so!" Her voice had risen to a shriek, and in her great dark olive eyes tears of mortification, of anger and resentment were welling up.

"I am surprised at you, Regina!" her husband said. "You, such an intelligent woman, not to understand so simple a thing—and one besides on which not only business, but the very conduct of life depends!"

"But I do understand; no one better.—What I don't is why you should pay those fifteen thousand roubles, Albert."

"Because I owe them!" he answered in a low voice, his pale tired face bent forward, and an ironical, though mournful, smile flitting over his thin lips.

"Always the same thing! You bought materials on credit. Very well; you owe money for them. But you sold goods on credit the same way, and they owe you for them too. When they don't pay, and make a 'playta,' what are you to do? Must you still pay? What? Are you to lose that Frumkin may gain? What?" she cried, as red as fire.

An uproar followed.

"The man's no good!"

"O you great merchant! Ay! ay!"

"You ought to fail now—and gain fifty per cent thereby."

"Regina is in the right!"

"Don't play the honest fool now; there's a pot of money at stake."

They were all gesticulating at him with fiery faces.

Here Felix Fishbin put in his word, speaking listlessly from his rocking-chair. "Pay! pay!—That any ass can do; any Pole even is clever enough for that.—Oh, what an artful dodge!"

Here Grünspan junior, a university student, raised his voice in thunder to pierce the din. "Let us consider matters calmly—" he began, and struck on a glass with his knife for silence; but all in vain. Sigismund himself could not be heard for the noise and tumult. Meanwhile Grünspan senior paced the room, with looks of disdain at his son-in-law, who on

his side was casting glances of intelligence at Moritz. The latter was, not very patiently, awaiting the result of the family council, and, while scrutinizing the old man, debating whether to trust him or not.

He very much desired to do so, but the desire grew weaker as he waited and watched old Grünspan. Reflection came, and with it an unaccountable sense of shame, when he recalled Charles and Max. Moreover, he dared no longer put trust in Grünspan: that cunning round face made him uneasy as he watched him. And those eyes! they seemed to pass from one to another of all the company with such a crafty, knowing expression!—from Fishbin's trousers, appraised by him as the young man rocked in his chair, to the heavy gold watch-chain (the weight of which he seemed to be calculating) of Albert Grosman, now sitting with uplifted head and eyes on the ceiling, as if he heard nothing of the riotous noise around him, raised by his wife and her relations to forbid him to pay and force on him a shameful 'playta'; and then to the big pocket-book, in which Landau, an old Jew with a carroty beard on his face and a round silken cap on his head, was anxiously seeking for something or other.

No. Moritz felt every moment less and less trust in the man.

"Hush, hush, good friends, please, and let's have a cup of tea," Grünspan called out, as soon as the maid had brought in the bubbling and hissing samovar; then, in lordly tones: "Ask Miss Mela to do the honours," he commanded Francis.

A slight lull followed.

Mela came in, bowed to the company, and proceeded to pour out the tea.

"This affair is sure to make me quite ill," Regina said, wiping her eyes. "My heart is ailing, and I have not a moment of peace."

"Well, since you go to Ostend regularly every year, you will now have something to go for!"

"Grosman, none of that! She is my daughter!" said Grünspan, his voice raised in stern rebuke.

"Mela, you have not greeted me," Moritz whispered, sitting down by the side of the youngest daughter of the firm Grünspan & Lansberg.

"Why, did you not see me bow to you all?" she said, passing a cup to Sigismund.

"I had rather you bowed to me in particular," was his reply, as he stirred his tea.

"Does that matter to you?" she queried, raising her melancholy greyish-blue eyes and her face to him. She was very lovely, with wonderfully regular features.

"Does it matter? I dearly wish you would take some little notice of me, Mela. I delight so much in seeing and talking to you."

A smile curved her pouting lips, very fair to see, and like in colour to the pale coral of Sicily. She answered nothing, but poured some tea into a saucer, out of which her father drank, still continuing to pace the room.

He saw that smile. "Have I said anything ridiculous?" he asked.

"No. I was only reminded of what Mrs. Stephanie said this morning. It appears you told her last night at the play that you could not flirt with Jewesses; that they did not appeal to you. Did you?" and she looked at him steadily.

"I did. But what of that? First, I never flirt with you; and then, you have nothing in you—no, nothing whatever—of the Jewish type. On my word of honour!" he added, for he saw the same smile on her lips once more.

"That means I am to your liking. Thanks, Moritz, for your frankness."

"Does it offend you?"

"Why, no. It leaves me quite indifferent," she replied sternly, and her voice made him look her way in surprise. But her face gave no explanation, for her eyes were bent on the saucer she was just filling anew.

"Let us look at things calmly," Sigismund was for a second time saying, combing meanwhile his copper-coloured beard with a tiny comb.

"Why talk?" Mrs. Grosman exclaimed. "Father, tell Albert

plainly that the way he manages affairs will bring us to real bankruptcy in a year. He won't hear me, because of his philosophical principles, as he calls them; but just tell him, Father, that though a doctor of philosophy and chemistry, he is a silly man to throw his money away."

"Better tell her, Father, if you please, not to interfere with matters she does not understand, and not to worry me with her noise, for I begin to have quite enough of it."

"And that's how he speaks to me, for all my goodness and kindness? What?"

"Be quiet, Regina!"

"I will not be quiet. Money—*my* money is at stake.—I tire him! He has enough of me! Oh, what a fine gentleman—of Lodz! Oh yay! Oh yay!" she screamed with ironical spite.

"Let him compound—pay fifty per cent," said old Landau, gravely.

"Why pay anything at all? Pay nothing. Will Frumkin give us back one farthing of what's our due?"

"Regina, you do not understand. Grosman, will you show us your assets and liabilities?" said Sigismund, unbuttoning his university coat.

"Twenty-five per cent is the utmost he should give," Grünspan senior said, blowing into his saucer.

"There's a more excellent way," Fishbin remarked, puffing at his cigar.

No one answered him; they were all clustering round the table and bending over the papers scribbled over with figures that Sigismund added up swiftly.

"Liabilities, fifty thousand roubles," he called out.

"And how much has he got?" Moritz said out of curiosity, getting up from his seat; for Mela had left the room.

"That will be found later, when the settlement rate has been determined."

"H'm! the affair is quite feasible."

"As good as money in pocket."

"Regina, you need not be distressed."

Grosman, rising to his feet, said firmly: "So, you would

have me make a fraudulent bankruptcy! But as to my being a swindler, I shall not; don't think it."

"You must settle. Won't you? Then I redemand my dowry—with interest—and get a divorce. You're too fine a gentleman for me, so why should I trouble about you?"

"Hush, Regina. Grosman will settle for twenty-five per cent. Be easy. It's I who am in this affair, and will see to it all by myself," said Grünspan senior to comfort her.

"Albert has a screw loose somewhere," said Fishbin to Moritz; "where may that be?"

"In the upper storey," Moritz replied impatiently, being anxious to get away and rejoin Mela.

"You want your portion? Take it. You want a divorce? You shall have it. You want the money I have left? Grab it. I am sick of remaining in this den of scoundrels! And with you, Regina, I shall never hit it off. You perpetually complained that you were ashamed to be seen in the street when you had no children; now you have four, you are just as displeased."

"Tut, tut! all that's your private business," the old man observed, putting his saucer down on the table.

"But she has never been satisfied with anything I have done; she's always wrangling."

"Have I not reason? Have I not a cause, when he wants me to drive out with those wretched hacks that everybody laughs at?"

"Oh, they will do all right; better people than you have gone afoot."

"But I want to drive, and I won't have those miserable horses."

"Buy some then; I can afford no others."

"You Jews, shut up!" Fishbin cried, rocking himself again.

"He has gone crazy!" she went on. "Does one need money to buy what is wanted? Has Wulff any money? And yet he's starting a factory. Has Bernstein any money?—Yet he's furnishing his house for a hundred thousand roubles!" she exclaimed, looking with dazed eyes from one to another of her family.

Albert turned his back on her, and looked out of the window.

The dispute recommenced, and soon came to its height. All were babbling together, leaning on the table, thumping it, tearing papers from each other's hands, ciphering on the oilcloth, inventing more and more disgraceful ways and means of making a "playta," abusing each other, jumping up from the table, sitting down again with a torrent of words: all those beards and faces, mouths and moustaches, were twitching and aquiver; so much excited were they by those figures showing how much money could be made; so furious with that idiot who stood with his back turned, and would not so much as hear of a "playta"!

Even Grünspan senior lost his composure, and set to argue at the top of his voice; Regina, worn out by emotion, lay on a sofa, weeping convulsively; Landau flung back the oilcloth, and set to cipher on the bare table with a piece of chalk, now and again giving vent to some grave remark; while Grünspan junior, flushed and all in perspiration, was loudest of them all, crying: "Let's come to an understanding!" and checking the columns of figures by means of the factory ledger, which Regina had brought.

Moritz was alone in taking no part in the clamour. He was seated under the fan palm beside Fishbin, who, lolling in his chair, puffed away at his cigar, and time and again cried out: "You Jews, shut up!"

"The operetta is hardly entertaining," said Moritz, much bored; and having by this time completely abandoned the idea of doing any business with Grünspan, he walked out to seek Mela.

He found her in the room of her grandmother, for whom all the family had the deepest respect and the most sedulous care.

The old woman sat in an easy-chair on wheels, near the window. She was not far from a hundred years old, paralysed and in her second childhood; her face was so puckered and shrivelled that not a trace of any expression remained. Nothing was to be seen there but a parchment-yellow skin,

in which two black eyes glittered like glass beads; on her head she had a dark wig covered with one of those coloured velvet and lace caps that Jewish women wear in small towns.

Mela was feeding her with beef-tea, which she put into her mouth by means of a tiny spoon; and her sunken cheeks and lips moved with fishlike gulps to take in the food.

Moritz made a bow. She stopped eating, looked at him vacantly, and spoke with a hollow voice that seemed to come from underground: "Who's this, Mela?"

She could no longer recognize any but her nearest relatives.

"Moritz Welt. Mother's brother.—Welt!" she repeated, stressing the word.

"Welt, Welt," the old dame mumbled between her toothless gums, and opened her mouth wide for the spoonful of beef-tea her grand-daughter was giving her.

"Are they still quarrelling?" Mela inquired.

"With a noise as on Atonement Day."

"Poor Albert!"

"Are you sorry for him?"

"Why, his very wife and our family won't let him act as a man. Regina," she added sorrowfully, with a sigh, "Regina really dismays me with those huckster's ways of hers."

"There are the makings of a good manufacturer in the man. Idealism is his illness. But after the first 'playta,' provided he gets enough out of it, he will be cured."

"I can understand neither my father, nor my uncles, nor you, Moritz, nor this town of Lodz. The very blood boils within me when I see what goes on here."

"What goes on here? It's all right. Lots of money made —and there you are!"

"But how made? by what means?"

"That's all one. The way a rouble is made does not detract one kopek from its worth."

"Now you are cynical."

"I am simply a man who does not blush to call things by their names."

"Let us drop the subject; I am too worn out even to dispute."

She had done feeding the old woman, whose pillows she patted and arranged for her, then kissed her hand.

The latter caressed her face with decrepit skeleton-like fingers, and asked once more, with her eyes fixed on Moritz: "Who's this, Mela?"

"Welt, Welt.—Moritz, come to me for a moment now, if you have time."

"I should always find time, Mela, if you would but let me."

"Welt, Welt," the old woman repeated, in a dull voice, and opened her mouth, and looked with dim eyes out of the window at the factory walls that she saw.

"Moritz, I have already told you to pay me no compliments."

"Believe me, Mela, I am speaking frankly. I give you my word, the word of an honest man, that whenever I see or hear you, I am forced—not only to speak to you as to no other woman, but to think and feel differently as well. In you, Mela, there is such a wonderful tenderness of heart, you are such a true woman—— O Mela! how few there are like you in Lodz!" He said all this earnestly, following her to her room.

"Will you please see me to Rose's house?" she asked, without replying to his words.

"If you wished me not to come, I would beg you to let me," he returned.

She pressed her brow against the window-pane, looking at the sparrows. Frantic with joy in this first day of spring, they were pursuing and fighting one another about the garden.

"What are you thinking of?" he whispered.

"Whether Albert will do as he intended, or as they wish."

"Of course he will declare himself a bankrupt and settle with his creditors."

"And I, who know him, am positive he will not."

"I'll bet you that he will."

"And I would give anything that he should not."

"True, Mela, Albert has got some philosophical bees in his bonnet. But, for all that, he's a shrewd fellow; and I'll wager all I have that he'll not pay more than twenty-five roubles in the hundred."

"Oh! and how dearly, how very dearly I do wish it might not be."

"Do you know, it strikes me it was you who should have married him. Mela, if you had, you two would have become beggars—but such holy ones, they would have exhibited you in a show-case."

"I am fond of him, but he is not the type of man I should care to marry."

"Well, who then is?"

"Try and find out!" And she smiled again, with that faint delicate smile of hers.

"Boroviecki, I am sure. All the women in Lodz are in love with him."

"No, no. To my mind, he is a cold, relentless fortune-seeker. Besides, he is too much like the rest of you."

"What of Oscar Meyer? Handsome, a baron, and a millionaire. His barony is indeed something of the Mecklenburg type, but his millionaireship is quite incontestable."

"I saw him once. He looked like a boor in disguise. They say he's a dreadful man."

"Yes. A wild passionate fellow, a regular Prussian brute!" he said, with hate in his voice.

"Is he? He begins to interest me then."

"Enough; he's a boor.—What do you think of Bernard Endelman?"

"Oh, he's quite a Jew!" she said contemptuously.

"Ah, how thoughtless I have been! Why, you were bred in Warsaw, and lived there in Polish society, and went about all the Polish *salons* and circles; how could Jews, or anyone in Lodz, be to your taste? You are so used to those dishevelled young students, those ranting Radicals all the

time on the look-out for a legacy or a sinecure, and to that exquisite atmosphere of flippant humbug, and polite wordy stabs at each other. Ha ha! I have been there too; and when I remember those days and people, I feel I could die with laughter!"

"Let them be, Moritz. You speak too bitterly to be impartial; and I will not listen to you," she snapped back, much hurt. For although she had lived in Lodz for a couple of years with her father, she still lived in spirit amongst those circles which he had just derided so mercilessly.

She went out, and presently returned, dressed to go to town.

Outside, an elegant open carriage was waiting.

"Only as far as the New Market-place, where there is less mud, and we shall get out."

The carriage set off at full speed.

"Do you know, Mela, you are a puzzle to me."

"How so?"

"Just by what you are. I know the women of our people well, I can and I do appreciate their good sides, but I know them, and I know that they do not (as you do) take seriously what is written in books.—You remember Ada Wasereng? Well, she too was in Warsaw, and in the same social set as you were. She also was just as enthusiastic about everything, and just as ardent to do things; and she, just like you now, used to dispute with me about freedom and equality, and virtue, and the ideals of life."

"That's just what I do not do," she interrupted.

"That may be; but let me go on.—She was the most idealistic of idealists. But after she got married to her Rosenblatt—well, she forgot all about that nonsense. Idealism was not in her line any more."

"And you like that, do you?"

"Yes. You see, when she had time at home afterwards, she amused herself with poetry. Why should she not amuse herself? Poetry is esteemed in Polish houses, it gives a fashionable tone, and is besides not so tiresome as balls and plays."

"So it is only an amusement in your eyes?"

"I don't say it of you, or of Polish women—you and they are of a different sort—I am speaking of the Jewesses. Yes, for them it is nothing more. Consider: what on earth more can it be to them? I am a Jew, Mela, and am not ashamed to say so, anywhere and at any time; what should I gain by denying it? I, like all our people, care for nothing beyond my own interest; it is not in my blood to care. See, there's Boroviecki; a strange fellow he is! My schoolfellow in Warsaw, my fellow student in Riga, and my friend. We have lived together for so many years, and I thought I knew him for one of us. His claws are sharp, he's a man of Lodz —quite!—and a better business man than myself. And yet he at times does unaccountable things, things none of us would ever do. He is a Lodzian indeed; and notwithstanding, he has now and again such idealistic fancies, such unpractical dreams, for the sake of which, if he had but two roubles in his pocket, he would give one—and for which I would give five kopeks, and only provided there were no means of avoiding the gift."

"But what does all this tend to?" she asked, touching the driver with her parasol to make him pull up.

"To point out that you have in your nature something like what the Poles have too."

"May that not possibly be called a soul?" she said playfully, as she got out.

"Rather too large an order!" was the reply.

"Let's go along Srednia Street, I want to take a stroll."

"Well, but the shortest way is by Vidzevska, and then along Cegielniana."

"You will be sooner rid of me that way!"

"Mela! you know how much I enjoy your company."

"Because I listen so patiently to you?"

"Yes, and because, when you have your present ironical expression, you look quite pretty, quite pretty."

"Not quite pretty, this compliment of yours: too much of the wholesale dealer in it."

"You'd prefer Warsaw ones: retail, at short date, and good security."

"What I prefer is good breeding and honesty."

"To make sure of them, would you not like marriage articles as well?" he retorted maliciously, settling his glasses on his nose.

She felt offended. "Have you then been leading me on to this conclusion?"

"You asked for it."

"I only asked you to take me to Rose's house," she answered with strong emphasis.

"And I—would take you anywhere, if you were only willing," he cried, concealing with a smile the unaccustomed emotion which possessed him.

"Thanks, Moritz, but someone else shall do that," she retorted rather tartly. After which she ceased speaking, gazing silently and in dejection down the street, which was extremely deep in mud, on its dirty hovels, and on the faces of the numerous pedestrians.

Moritz, in a rage with himself and still more with her, walked on taciturnly, and throwing a moody glance, now at those who were going by, now on her pale face. With a sneer, he noticed the looks of commiseration with which she eyed the wretched little children playing on the sidewalks and in the doorways.

He understood her, but to an extent that compelled him to think her a very great simpleton. The insensate "Polish idealism," which he held to be part of her nature, annoyed him indeed; but at the same time there was, to the dry rigidity of the man's mind, something attractively fresh in the delicacy of feeling, and in the singular poetry—all grace and kindness—which emanated from her marble-white features, from her pensive expression, and from the whole of her slender form, so harmonious in its full-grown beauty.

"Have I been wearisome? You are so silent," were her first words after that long pause.

"I feared to be in the way. You were possibly thinking of things very great and lofty."

"You may be sure they were too lofty for any sneers of yours to reach them."

"Do you know what you have just done, Mela? Two things: snubbed me, and flattered yourself."

"Only one of them was in my intention."

"To snub me?"

"Yes, and I did it with pleasure."

He was somewhat hurt. "Do you then dislike me so much, Mela?"

"Oh no, Moritz," she said, and shook her head with a mischievous smile.

"But you do not love me, either, do you?"

"Oh, no, Moritz."

"Well, we are having a nice little flirtation, are we not?" he remarked, irritated by her tone.

"We are such near relations that it may pass; it does not mean anything."

Here she stopped to give a few groschen to an old hunchbacked beggarwoman, all in tatters, who stood by a railing, with a baby in her arms, and begged clamorously. Moritz looked on in mockery, but suddenly pulled a bit of money out of his purse, and gave it to the woman.

"And you, too, give to the poor?" she asked, much astonished.

"I have ventured on a charitable transaction, happening to have a bit of bad money by me."

"You are an incurable cynic!" she said, walking on a little faster.

"I might be cured. I have time enough; if I only had the opportunity—of being treated by such a doctor as you——"

"Good-evening, Moritz."

"So soon? I am sorry."

"Not I.—Will you be at the Colony this evening?"

"Can't say. Am leaving Lodz to-night."

"Do go there, give my love to the girls. And tell Mrs. Stephanie I shall be at her shop to-morrow forenoon."

"All right; then in return, please give Miss Rose my compliments—and tell young Müller he is an ass."

They shook hands and parted. His eyes followed her, as she entered the gateway of the Mendelsohn palace.

The sun now was setting, and had sunk behind the town; but the blood-red fires in the western sky were reflected from a thousand casements. And soon, in the twilight, Lodz was hushed, and seemed sinking into the ground; so many and many houses and roofs were merging into one huge, flat, grey, indistinguishable mass, only just marked out by the streets, where the gaslights were beginning to appear in lines interminably long; and by the tall factory chimneys, that—rising like a mighty forest of red tree-trunks, standing up above the town, and seemingly swaying and quivering against the bright horizon—still flamed with all the glories of the west.

"A moonstruck girl!" thought Moritz. "I'd like to marry her, though. 'Grünspan, Lansberg, and Welt': a good sound firm that would be! That must be thought over"; and he added, with a smile: "It would be a splendid stroke of business."

CHAPTER VII

"WHAT can be the matter with Moritz tonight?" Mela said to herself, as she walked into the great two-storeyed house at the corner, commonly called the Shaya palace. —"Ah, that's it! I have a dowry—fifty thousand roubles.—He must be in sore straits indeed; that's what makes him so loving all at once."

She had no time for further reflections; Rose Mendelsohn, her dearest friend, had rushed into the antechamber to meet her. She had a slight limp.

"I was just sending the coach for you, I wanted to see you so!"

"Moritz Welt accompanied me here; we walked slowly, and he paid me all manner of compliments."

"That Jew!" Rose ejaculated with scorn, as she was taking off her friend's things, passing hat, gloves, veil, and mantle to a footman as she did so.

"He sends you his sincerest congratulations."

"Silly man! He thinks I ought to know him when he bows in the street."

"Do you dislike him?" Mela said, looking at her dishevelled hair in the mirror between two of the artificial palms that adorned the room.

"I have detested him ever since Father praised him to Fabek; and Will detests him just as much. A good-looking puppet!"

"Is Wilhelm here?"

"We all are, and everybody here is bored to death, waiting for you."

"And Vysocki?" she inquired in a lower and not too firm voice.

They passed hand in hand through several rooms, dim in the gathering twilight, but gorgeously upholstered.

"And what are you about, Rose?"

"Oh, weary of everything, and pretending that people entertain me.—And you, dear?"

"I am weary too, but don't pretend I am not."

"A horrible life!" Rose sighed.

"And how long is this to drag on so?"

"How long? You know best. Till we die, perhaps."

"Ah, what would I not give to be able to love! What would I not give?"

"Why, you'd give your whole self—and your millions thrown in."

"No," she corrected, with a bitter intonation; "you meant to say: 'Your millions—with yourself thrown in!'"

"Rose!" Mela said in a reproachful tone.

"No, dear, you meant nothing of the sort"; and she kissed her fondly.

They entered a room of no great size. It had the look of a mortuary chapel, being quite black: the furniture was of black wood, the walls were covered with black silk damask, and the *portières* were of black plush. Two stark naked bronze figures of gigantic size stood bending backwards, to balance the branches of oddly twisted orchids which each held up in his sinewy arms, and from whose flowers of opalescent white crystal a misty glimmer was shed over the apartment. Upon the black sofas and arm-chairs there sat a good many people, in the most unconventional postures. One of the men even lay stretched out on the carpet that covered the whole floor. This too was black, and had an enormous nosegay of red orchids embroidered in the middle, so as to look like monstrously strange creatures, crawling about the room.

"Will! you might perform a somersault on the carpet, in honour of Mela's arrival," Rose observed.

Wilhelm Müller, a big blond fellow, clad in a smart sport suit, rose from his arm-chair, and performed three somersaults on the carpet, one after another, with all the perfec-

tion of a trained acrobat. Then he stood bowing round the room, just like a circus-man.

"Bravo, Müller!" cried the man who lay on the carpet, near the window; and he lit a cigarette.

"Mela, come here and kiss me," was the command of a girl very certainly out of her teens, who lay in a low rocking-chair, and lazily turned her cheek to be kissed. Mela obeyed, and went to sit down on a sofa near Vysocki. He was bending over a tiny rosy-cheeked fair-haired girl, whose feet were upon a stool. From time to time he brushed his coat-lapels, pushed his soiled coat-cuffs up his sleeves, or twirled his moustache energetically. He was saying:

"From a strictly feministic point of view, there ought to be no legal inequality between man and woman."

"Yes, yes," the girl said dolefully; "but, Mieciek, how very tedious you are!"

"Won't you say good-evening, Mieciek?" said Mela.

"I beg your pardon, madam, but Miss Fela will not let herself be convinced."

Here Rose swooped down upon him. "Mieciek, you must pay a double fine. First because you called Mela *madam*, and second, because you just called Fela *miss*."

"I shall pay, Rose, I shall pay at once." And he proceeded to look in all his pockets, unbuttoning his coat.

"Mieciek," Fela twittered, "please stop unbuttoning your clothes. That's shocking."

"If you have not the money by you," Mela said, "I'll pay."

"Thanks, but I have. Last night I was called to visit a sick man."

"Rose!" Toni called from her rocking-chair, "I feel bored, and I won't have it!"

"Will! do you hear, you lazy boy? Amuse Toni."

"I won't. Must lie down. Got a pain in my back."

"You? What pain can you have?"

"Oh," said Fela, laughing, "the same sort as you have, Toni!"

"We must give him a massage."

"How I'd like to take your photograph, Will! You look quite in high feather to-night," Rose said, in an undertone. Her large grey eyes were beginning to flash with a greenish phosphorescence. Her very large mouth, with thin lips, which she bit now and again, was like a long slash across her milk-white face with its transparent skin, surrounded as by an aureole of pure copper-red hair parted in the middle, and combed over her temples and ears; of these only the rose-red lobes were visible, and the great sapphires with brilliants set round them, that dangled in sight.

"You may photograph me, but in this attitude," Will cried, and threw himself down full length upon his back, his hands clasped behind his head, and laughing merrily with a pleasant voice.

"Girls, cluster round me! Come, birdies, come!"

"Why, he's quite a handsome fellow to-night!" Toni whispered, bending over his fair, young, and typically German face.

"Yes, he's young," Fela said.

"Do you not prefer Vysocki?"

"But Vysocki's legs: they are so very thin!"

"Hush, Fela, don't say such things."

"Why not?"

"Simply because they are improper."

"And why improper, my dear Rose? I know quite well how men talk about us. Bernard tells me everything. He told me such a funny story I nearly laughed myself to death."

"Tell it to us, Fela," Toni whispered, yawning; she was bored.

"Little one," Bernard protested from the carpet where he lay, "if you tell it while I am here, I'll never tell you anything again."

"Oho! he's ashamed of himself. Ha ha!" And she set to prancing about the room like mad, knocking down furniture, till she came up against Toni.

"Fela, what on earth are you up to?"

"I am bored, Rose, I am so bored I shall go mad!" And

she seated herself on one of the black plush-covered cushions which the footman had brought in.

"Now, where did you get that scar, Will?" she asked, passing a taper finger over a seam that gashed one side of his face, from the ear to the extremity of his short, scanty moustache.

"It's a sabre-cut," he returned, with a make-believe snap at her finger.

"About a woman?"

"Just so. Bernard will tell you all—he was my second, and made such a noise over the business that everybody in Berlin heard about it."

"Tell us, Bernard."

"Let me alone. Got no time," Bernard grunted; he was lying on one side in contemplation of the ceiling (painted over with nude winged nymphs that flew after Aurora's car) and smoking cigarette after cigarette, offered and lighted by a manservant in scarlet French livery, whose post was close to the door. "Besides," he added, "the affair is really too scandalous."

"Now, Will, you know that when we made arrangements for these gatherings of ours, we agreed to tell one another everything—everything!" and she advanced her arm-chair nearer to him.

"Speak, Wilhelm," said Rose, with an odd laugh, "you shall marry me as a reward."

"I might, Rose," Will answered, "for the sake of the devil you have inside you."

"And for my marriage portion, that is bigger still!" she said with a jeer.

"Oh, but you are all so tiresome!—Will, the pig! my dear Will! give us the pig!" Toni sighed, and stretched herself out on her arm-chair with such a jerk that one large button—an imitation cameo—flew off her bodice. Her sense of boredom was so excruciating that she begged and implored him in the tones of a teasing child: "Give us the pig, Will! Oh, give us the pig!"

Will got up from the carpet on all fours, curved his back,

and then, with short and stiff successive jerks, gave a very good imitation of an old pig's movements, with an occasional grunt.

Toni went off in roars of laughter, Rose slapped him vociferously; Fela, bubbling over with merriment, tapped the carpet with her heels; her short fair hair came undone, falling all over her merry, rosy face, and her head looked like a bundle of straw over a tavern door.

Mela, whose gravity had given way amid the general merriment, pelted Will Müller with cushions. He, every time he was hit, would throw out his hind legs in a funny way, and utter a long-drawn-out squeal. When he had enough of it, he jerked up and rubbed his back against Rose's legs: then, lying down in the centre of the carpet, he stretched his legs stiffly, and, like a weary pig, gave a snort and a grunt, and at last, with a feeble squeal, sank to rest.

"Excellent!—As good as good can be!" the young ladies screamed out; they were in ecstasies.

But Vysocki was staring aghast. He had for the first time witnessed such a scene of circus buffoonery—all to amuse some millionaires who were bored! He forgot to brush his coat-lapels or push back his cuffs, or twirl his moustache, but looked round at the women's faces, and muttered with disgust: "A merry-andrew!"

"From what standpoint?" Mela queried; she had been the first to return to her senses.

"From every standpoint of human nature!" he replied, sternly; then he rose, and looked about for his hat, into which Fela was trying to squeeze both her feet.

"Are you going, Mieciek?" she asked, astonished at his sternness.

"I must go; I feel ashamed that I am a human being."

"François, kindly open all the doors: outraged Humanity is leaving us!" scoffed Bernard, who, during all the performance, had been lying still and smoking cigarettes.

"Rose, Mieciek is offended and wants to go away; don't let him!"

"What's all this about? Why would you go?"

Doctor Vysocki's first indignation had evaporated; and, while attempting to get his poor top-hat clear of Fela's feet, he explained gently: "Because I am in a hurry; I promised to see somebody."

"Mieciek, pray, pray don't go yet; you told me you would see me home," Mela whispered earnestly, and her marble-white face flushed with emotion.

He did not go, but sat on gloomily, leaving Bernard's gibes unanswered, and paying no heed to the jests (reminiscences of his *Burschen* days) made by Müller, who was once more sitting at Rose's feet.

A dead silence fell upon the company.

The electric lights, tremulous within the crystal flowers, flung a sort of powdery bluish gleam about the room—on the dull black walls, from which four Italian aquarelles framed in black velvet and suspended with silken cords looked forth like azure eyes; and on all those heads, wearied and worn by idleness. They gleamed upon the brass ornaments of the piano, that stood in one corner with the keyboard open, bearing some likeness to a monster with long, ivory teeth. The inside shutters were closed, the heavy *portières* let down; no sound of voices came in from without, except a faint murmur and dull feeble quiverings that went through the room, like weak and barely discernible pulsations.

The smoke that Bernard incessantly and voluminously poured forth was wafted about in a thin bluish-grey cloud, veiling Aurora's car and the nude figures around it, as it were with a tissue of the finest gauze; rolling along the walls and clinging to the textures of plush, it finally floated into the rooms beyond by the doorway, in which—like a sharp discord in that symphony of swarthy tints and shades —stood the manservant in his scarlet livery, at everyone's service.

"Rose, I am bored, bored, bored to death!" Toni said with a moan.

"And I," Fela cried, slipping Vysocki's top-hat off her feet, "I am enjoying myself immensely!"

"And I," Bernard put in sarcastically, "best of you all; for I don't at all need to be amused."

"François," Rose ordered, "bring the tea in!"

"Don't go away yet, Rose, I'll tell you the rest of the story." Will lifted himself on one elbow, and whispered to her, more than once with a kiss on the dainty lobe of her ear.

"Now, don't bite at my ear-ring! You kiss too hard, and your lips are so very hot!" she murmured, though bending her head down towards him, and biting her lips hard; while from underneath her heavy, half-closed, and discoloured lids there flashed again and again a phosphorescent gleam.

"And so, being terrified, he crossed himself," Will continued rather more loudly.

"What! Was the man a Catholic?"

"No, but he thought there wasn't any harm in being on the safe side."

She listened till the end of the story, but unsmilingly and without interest.

"Will, you're a good lad, a dear fellow," she said, stroking his cheek; "but your anecdotes are too tedious, too stupid—quite in Berlin style.—Now, I am back at once. In the mean time, Bernard, will you play us something?"

Bernard rose, pushed the piano-stool into place with his foot, and forthwith began to play with great spirit and *bravura*. Everybody at once cast off his depression, and was lively again. Wilhelm started up, and danced with Fela. The dance was fast and furious. Her hair fell down and fluttered about like wisps of straw in a high gale, coming over her eyes down to her chin, and streaming out behind her. She set it right with deft hands, and they danced till they could dance no more.

Toni, lying back in her chair, followed Will's motions, but with glances that told of her weary state.

The servant brought in several small ebony stands, inlaid with mother of pearl, which he put the tea-things on.

Rose got up lazily, and with a slightly halting gait, swing-

ing her wide hips from side to side, walked towards the door. She was stopped on the way by Vysocki, who said in an undertone: "I assure you, madam, in all this there is nothing of decadence; it is something quite different."

"What is it then?" Mela inquired, catching hold of Vysocki's hands lest he should fall to brushing his coat-lapels or pushing back his cuffs.

"Oh, how I should love to be a decadent!" Toni exclaimed. "Mieciek, can't I become a decadent? Mieciek, I want so to be a decadent, for everything does bore me awfully."

"This is simply the laziness which results from too much time and too much money. Boredom is a complaint that only the rich suffer from. You are bored, Mela, Rose is bored, Toni is bored; so is Fela. And along with you those two shallow-brained fellows are bored as you are; and outside your circle one half of the wives and daughters of our millionaires are bored likewise. Everything bores you; why? Because you can have all that is to be bought. Nothing matters to you, except to be diverted; and the wildest diversions you can enjoy must end in vexation of spirit—in boredom. Now, from a social standpoint——"

"Mieciek, you do not think bad of me?"—Mela interrupted him stroking his hand.

"I admit no exceptions. You too belong to a degenerate race, to a race which lost all contact with nature. And life takes its revenge on you——"

"Mela, listen to him, and he will teach you that, from every one of the 'standpoints' known to him, the greatest crime in the world is to have money."

"Come here, Rose, and sit with us."

"I shall, in a minute; but I must first look in and see Father."

Leaving them, and passing through the hall, already illuminated with electric girandoles, she went upstairs to her father's study, which was nearly dark.

Shaya Mendelsohn, attired in the ritual vestments prescribed for prayers, and with a phylactery strapped upon his bared left arm, according to the canons, was sitting in the

centre of the room, saying prayers in a low voice, and bending his head reverently.

Two old men with white beards, official singers in the synagogue, and clad in the same ritual vestments as Shaya, with white and black stripes alternately, were availing themselves of the last radiance of sunset that still remained in the sky, to pour out a weird, fervid, and singularly mournful chant, accompanied with numerous bowings and bendings. The voices were pregnant with complaint and sorrow. Now they sounded like brazen trumpets, venting sonorous sadness; now they swelled with sombre despair, or broke out into hopeless lamentations. At times they would rise to a shrill piercing cry, with long reverberations in the silence of the dwelling; at others again they would sink into a melody of soft liquid tones, making one think of flutes played in the profound calm of blossoming gardens, amongst shady places exhaling ambrosial fragrance, in a slumberous region haunted by dreams of ecstatic love, into which there crept the sighs of melancholy longing—for the palm-tree gardens of Jerusalem—for the illimitable wailing wilderness—for the burning sun of the south—for the lost and well-beloved land of their fathers!

Their bowings became more and more frequent and in more perfect time; their eyes glowed with rapture, and their long, grey beards trembled with emotion. They felt themselves inebriated by the sound of their own voices, and the movement of the chants that welled out of their breasts into the empty room, so quiet and so dim; that sobbed and entreated and implored, now thrilled and penetrated with the sadness of their affliction, now glorifying the goodness and the power of Him, the Lord of lords!

Outside of those windows, all was at rest. The great rabbit-warrens of the workmen's dwellings, on the opposite side of the street and over against Shaya's study, were beginning to twinkle with lights on every floor. From the other windows (as the room occupied one whole corner of the house) the park was seen, with a thickly planted grove of fir-trees, that separated the mansion from the factories; and there,

glimmering white through the deepening dusk, lay patches of yet unmelted snow, amongst the low shrubs on the lawns.

Shaya, sitting in the centre of his room, had in front of him a large window, built into the angle, whence his gaze could plunge outside, viewing the huge outlines of his factories, bristling with chimneys and with low corner buildings that stood at angles suggesting a mediæval fortification. Shaya was praying fervently; yet he could not help gloating over those mighty walls, now fading into the blackness of the night, whose dark mantle was seen in the distance falling over the city, and above it her mild peaceful face, that looked down from millions of stars.

The chants went on, until it was quite dark. The singers then put away their ritual vestments into velvet bags, on which certain Hebrew letters were embroidered in gold.

"Mendel, here is a rouble for you."

Shaya gave him a piece of silver, which Mendel examined with care by such light as still came through the casement.

"Yes, look well; it is no counterfeit.—But you, Abraham, I give you only seventy-five kopeks to-day. You were in no mind to sing, and your chant was only a make-believe. What! did you think to take me in—and God into the bargain?"

Abraham looked at Shaya with eyes full of tears and still glowing with ecstasy, took up the rouleau of coppers, bade him farewell, and disappeared noiselessly. All this time Rose had been standing in the doorway, listening to the chants. She was so impressed as several times to give way—almost but not quite—to a burst of laughter.

No sooner had the singers withdrawn than, touching a button, she flooded the room with light.

"Rose!"

"Anything you want?" she said, sitting down on the arm of her father's chair.

"Nothing. Is your company here?"

"All of them."

"Enjoying themselves?"

"Barely so. Müller himself is tedious to-night."

"Then what do you keep them for? You can always get merry people here. If you like, I'll drop a word to Stanislas, and he will order some for you; plenty of gay fellows in Lodz. Why should you be bored, and pay for it into the bargain?—And the man Vysocki: what of him?"

"He's a doctor. Quite a different sort from our Lodz men; an aristocrat by birth, his mother a countess. And he has a coat of arms."

"A coat of arms—and nothing besides! Do you like him?"

"Oh, fairly well; he's so different from the common run. And very learned."

"Learned, is he?" Shaya stroked his beard with a superb gesture, and listened attentively.

"He has written a book which some German university rewarded him for with a gold medal."

"A big medal?"

"Don't know." She gave a disdainful shrug.

"We shall be wanting a doctor for our hospital. If he is so clever a man, I should be glad to have him."

"Is the salary good?"

"Quite good. But that's of little account. He will have a first-rate practice: to serve in my firm is a valuable asset by itself. Tell him to come to my office to-morrow. A learned man is a deserving object, and I like to assist such."

"Did you tell Stanislas to invite Boroviecki here?"

"Rose, I have told you that he is Bucholc's man, and to Bucholc and whatever is his I wish the worst may happen! May the man himself become a bankrupt, and have to go into service!—On account of that robber, that cursed German who came here in a cart drawn by dogs, and has made all his fortune at our expense (may he and his posterity, even unto the tenth generation, be ruined utterly!)—through him I am always in feeble health, and my heart within me is in grievous pain, because he is continually stealing everything from me.—And that Boroviecki," he went on, vociferating furiously, "is the worst of all the Germans!"

"Why, Boroviecki is a Pole!"

"He a Pole? A fine Pole indeed! One who has printed such

cotton goods that half my wares were sent back to me from Russia as worthless: Bucholc's articles were superior, they said. He a Pole, and do such things—to the destruction of our industry! Why, he makes such patterns, and coloured so, that no countess need be ashamed to wear them; and for whom? For boors, for know-nothing blockheads. Why so? and for what reason?—Ah! how much I have lost through him! I, yes, and all our people as well. Those poor weavers, how much suffering he has caused them! He it was who brought old Fishbin to ruin—and thirty other firms besides. Never name him to me; when I but think of that man, my bowels within me are afflicted sorely. And he is worse than the very worst of Germans. With them one might come to an understanding; but with him? Oh no! he's a gentleman, a man who is a great noble. Pah!" And he spat with disgust and hatred.

"Shall I send your tea upstairs?"

"No, I shall have tea at Stanislas's house, and take Yulka the toys I got for her to-day from Paris."

Rose kissed her father and went out.

Shaya got up, switched off the light (for he was a saving man in every respect), and set to pacing his study quite in the dark. He hated the man Bucholc with all the mighty hate both of a fanatic and of a rival manufacturer whom he could not get the better of in any branch of the trade. No: Bucholc was first, always and everywhere, and that was what he could not forgive. For his, in his own conviction, was the greatest firm in all Lodz; he was standing at the head of the great multitude of Jews who offered him the reverential love and adoration of impecunious men, hypnotized by the millions which increased in his hands with the swiftness of an avalanche.

Forty years ago—oh! how well he recollected those times! —when Bucholc was already almost a millionaire, he, Shaya, had begun his career as a salesman at some petty shopkeeper's in the Old Town. His duties were to attract customers by loud and noisy touting, to carry packages to purchasers' dwellings, and at times to sweep the shop and the

side-walk in front of it. He would spend whole months thus, on the pavement all day; frost-bitten, rain-sodden, or scorched by the sun; jostled by foot-passengers, hungry and almost always in rags, always hoarse with clamorous touting, and lodging at night for a rouble a month in a horrible den in the poorest section of the ghetto.

Suddenly he disappeared from his abode, that had been the side-walk.

After a few years of absence he returned to Lodz, but no one recognized him there. He had brought back a little money, and set about doing business on his own. It made him smile now with self-pity, when he recalled those times—that miserable cart, in which he went peddling goods about the neighbouring villages; that horse, which got its food by the roadside, or along the peasants' cornfields; and the grinding inhuman misery to which he was a prey; for with a capital of fifty roubles (part of which had gone to buy horse and cart) he had to find food for himself and his wife and family.

Then came those first weaving looms that he set up, and the thousand little frauds—cheating on the weight of the raw material dealt out to the weavers who took it home, cheating by the way he measured the woven cloth, cheating his own stomach and the stomachs of his family—till at length he had enough to risk renting a disused factory.

He was the first, as soon as he got on, to send salesmen round to small towns. As to himself, he scarcely either slept or ate, or indeed lived, except to save money and to work. It was he who first in those days sold on credit to such as desired it, and bought goods on credit too; for Bucholc and the other German manufacturers had hitherto done business exclusively on the old cash system. It was he who first introduced shoddy goods into the country, thus lowering the reputation of Lodz textiles, which had been good till then. He, too, was the first to develop and perfect the method of exploiting everybody and everything.

A fire happened to destroy his rented factory. He at once built a new one of his own, with a thousand workmen. At

last, he was on a sure foundation. Luck followed him everywhere. Roubles in tens and hundreds of thousands, nay, in millions, flowed into his strong-boxes—from gentlemen's manors, from peasants' hovels, from little towns almost swallowed up in dirt, from the capitals, from the steppes. Ever in broader streams they came, and Shaya grew and prospered.

Others lost their money, or died, or succumbed to social or national calamities; Shaya stood firm. His old pavilions ever and anon happened to burn down; new and grander ones took their places, and absorbed all: the land, the stuffs, the men's brains, his rivals—turning all these into millions in the hands of Shaya.

Yet Bucholc still was greater, and Shaya could not overcome him. But as he himself grew greater, so also grew in him the craving to vanquish that man Bucholc. Every rouble got by the other was to him a rouble snatched from himself —stolen; and he lived in the chimerical hope that he might one day get the better of everybody in Lodz, and that, like the huge chimney, the biggest one of all, that he now could see looming in the night with its monstrous silhouette overtopping all the rest, he might at last come to reign over Lodz. But Bucholc was first in everything. Throughout the country, public opinion made much of him; his word was as good as ready money, people came to ask him for his advice, the goods he made were thought most of, and even the man himself commanded some respect; while as to Shaya, his swindling compeers themselves despised and hated the man.

He could make nothing of it all, and came to fancy that Bucholc was robbing him not only of money, but of everything he cared to have—and therefore of the glory of reigning over that forest of chimneys—Lodz. And for that he hated him all the more.

Pacing the dark room, he glanced through the window at the factory, and presently at the workmen's dwellings, brilliantly lighted up. And here he stopped abruptly and put on his spectacles. His eyes were on the third floor of the house

just in front, where three windows shone very brightly, and dim outlines of people passed to and fro.

Opening the window, he listened. The vibrant music of a violin playing some sentimental valse, accompanied by the full, deep tones of a moaning violoncello, was followed by a hush. Then the din of many merry voices broke out; and cascades of jovial laughter, with the clinking of plates and glasses, flooded the silent street. They were in high glee there.

Shaya pressed an electric button; the manservant came in.

"Who lives there?" he asked grimly, pointing to the opposite window.

"You shall know at once, sir."

"What, I am ailing, and they shall make merry? Why should they enjoy themselves at all? And how can they get money enough for their fun?" he thought, with a sense of irritation, and eyes glued to those windows.

"House E, third floor, No. 56; occupied by Ernest Ramish, master weaver in the fifth department," the footman glibly informed him.

"Very good. You will go and tell him to stop playing. I cannot sleep, and I do not want any of their merry-making. —Now order the horses to be put to.—Ernest Ramish is getting too much money, it seems, if he can afford to make merry," he reflected, engraving the name in his memory.

CHAPTER VIII

COMING at once. Good-bye till we meet," Boroviecki said, in a very ill humour, speaking through the telephone. Lucy had begged him to meet her at once in Milsch's wood; she had something of the greatest importance to tell him.

"And I must drive over to that wood—and at such a time!—She's out of her mind!" he grumbled.

Ever since six in the morning he had been in the office, without one minute of leisure; in the factory, to hasten the printing of some new patterns; driving over to the central office to see about the irregularities discovered by Bucholc in the principal warehouse; always rushing to and fro, or writing, or giving numberless directions. Ever so many matters were seething in his brain, ever so many workmen awaiting his directions, ever so many machines standing still until he gave orders. He had been at odds with Bucholc. His nerves could no longer stand the strain of waiting several days for a wire from Moritz about the price of cotton. Overburdened by the terrible daily yoke he had to bear, now he had taken up Knoll's duties, and bewildered besides as he was by the greatness and the number of the affairs he had to manage—here he had to go to a rendezvous outside the town with an infatuated woman!

He felt intensely annoyed.

To-day he had not had so much as time for a cup of tea. Bucholc, though unwell, had given orders they should carry him into the office in his arm-chair; and there, meddling with everything, raising his voice at everybody, he had done no more than frighten and confuse the clerks.

"Mr. Boroviecki," said Bucholc, seated, with bandages on

his legs, a shabby fur cap on his head, and his stick across his knees, "just phone to Marks: he's not to let Milner in Warsaw have a rouble's worth more of goods. He had a credit open, but he owes us too much, and I am informed that he intends one of these days to declare himself bankrupt."

Boroviecki phoned, then looked through a long column of figures.

"Mr. Horn," he said, "look through this again. There is some mistake; the railway charges are much too high. Probably they took the wrong number on the tariff." Horn had, for several days—since the Sunday before, to be precise—been transferred, on Bucholc's demand, from the office of the printing and bleaching department to his own personal service.

Horn, extremely pale, with livid lips and eyes reddened by overwork and insomnia, counted mechanically, made blunders, and was completely unable to concentrate; the figures danced before his eyes, as smuts dance in the breeze. He was always yawning and looking at the clock with an expression of intense weariness, and longing that twelve might soon strike.

"That woman, your protégée—let them give her two hundred roubles—to get drunk with! She's not worth fifty—she and her brats thrown in too!"

"Has our law department settled the business then?"

"It has. She must sign an official receipt. Bauer, you! have an eye to this affair, or there'll be somebody else to make her bring an action against us."

Horn bent his head over his work to conceal a smile of mischievous triumph.

"Mr. President," said Charles—"could you let me have your carriage?"

"Certainly, if you want one, and as often as you choose. I'll telephone to the stable instantly.—Kundel! push me away." This to the footman, who pushed the arm-chair to the telephone that was in connexion with the factories. "The stable!" he cried out, ringing violently. "A carriage this instant: send it at once to the office. And any time Mr.

Boroviecki orders it. . . . Who is speaking? Why, I am speaking, Bucholc, you simpleton!" he added in answer to the customary question of the switch-board operator.

On returning, the footman pushed the arm-chair back to his desk, and remained standing by.

"Horn, sit down beside me. I shall dictate to you.—Move more quickly when I tell you to do a thing!" he snarled.

Horn bit his lips in silence, and proceeded to write under Bucholc's dictation, who at the same time went on settling other matters, now and then exclaiming: "Don't fall asleep! I'm not paying you for sleeping!" and he thumped the floor vigorously with his stick.

Horn was so irritated and out of all patience at the time that he could scarce forbear from breaking out there and then. He was almost boiling over.

The telephone bell rang.

"Baron Oscar Meyer asks whether he can come and see Mr. President in half an hour?"

"Tell him, Mr. Boroviecki, I can see no one; I am ill in bed."

Charles phoned, and listened again.

"What does he want now?"

"He says it's personal business, very important."

"I can see no one.—Let Baron Oscar Meyer transact important business with my poodle—not with me! The dog! the lout!" he went on muttering in the intervals of dictation.

He could not bear Meyer, and was the man in Lodz who jeered the loudest at the title of baron, bought in Germany by Meyer, formerly a journeyman weaver in Bucholc's factory, now a manufacturer of woollen stuffs, and worth millions.

"Faster, man, faster!" Bucholc said to Horn with a growl.

"I write with only one hand."

"What does that mean?"

"That I cannot write faster than I do now."

Bucholc went on dictating, but somewhat more slowly; for Horn, as if to anger the man, wrote very deliberately,

frowning more and more heavily in his exasperation.

All was still in the office. Boroviecki, who had donned his overcoat, was at the window impatiently awaiting the carriage. The clerks, with heads all bent over their desks, were working away zealously, afraid to breathe too loud or to exchange a single word with one another, because of the presence of Bucholc. All feared him—all but Bauer alone, his old friend and confidant—the man who, as Boroviecki had inferred, must have secretly communicated that telegram to Zuker.

The carriage came at last; but as Charles was hurrying off, Bucholc called after him: "When you come back again, mind you step in here."

To which Boroviecki gave no answer but an inaudible curse. He was so tired with work, so worn out with racking suspense and waiting for Moritz's telegram, that he felt ready to drop with fatigue.

"Milsch's wood!" was his order to the coachman.

On arriving in front of an old brewery—a great dead, half-ruined house, he told the man to pull up and await his return.

He walked round the house in decay: round those walls with broken windows, the gate and all the doors gone, the roofs fallen in, and even some of the brick walls crumbling into the quaggy loam. He went round several fences in front of the storehouses and, crossing a squashy field of strong clay, in which the mud was over his ankles, at last entered Milsch's wood, as it was called.

"Deuce take that hysterical woman!" he swore, with increasing wrath; for the soft clayey soil stuck to his boots so fast that it was all he could do not to stick fast himself. "That heroine of romance!" he added resentfully, for he keenly felt his ridiculous position—playing the young lover, running through the mud to a trysting-place at the other end of the town—and in March besides!

It was a dull day. The clouds floated low, dissolving little by little into a thin penetrating drizzle. Lodz disappeared under dingy vapours and volumes of smoke, which lay like a

canopy all over the town, and seemed upheld by its thousand chimneys.

Boroviecki halted a little under the shelter of a summer restaurant, at present closed, which was quite near the wood. The place was quiet and sheltered, but Charles could see nothing from there, and so determined to enter the wood itself.

It was a wretched lot of fir-trees, slowly withering away, on account of the neighbouring factories, and also of the wells, which now went deeper and deeper into the soil, thus depriving the trees of their proper moisture. And then, a stream of waste products from the factories, flowing on like a many-coloured ribbon, and sinuously winding among the decaying fir-trees, had spread deleterious emanations all around, and brought death to those mighty trunks.

Slipping in the mud and snow, stumbling against roots and snags, Boroviecki went on and on into the wood, but could find Lucy nowhere.

Provoked by his fruitless search, chilled to the marrow by his dank surroundings, he was on the point of returning to his carriage, when on a sudden, darting from behind a tree where she had been hiding, Lucy threw her arms round his neck with such impetuosity that his hat was knocked off.

"I love you, Charles!" she cried, with a passionate kiss.

He kissed her back indeed, but without a word; he could not trust himself not to swear if he spoke. He put his arm round her, and so they walked about among the trees, over the slippery ground.

The wood was rustling with a dull dreary noise, and the needles of the withering fir-trees blew down upon their heads, along with the rain, that now was pattering louder in the branches.

Lucy was talking and chattering and babbling unweariedly, at times only interrupting her talk with a kiss, as she nestled up close to him caressingly, like a kitten. She prattled on about many things, as a baby would do, passing from one to another; and before she had done one sentence, she was beginning another with a kiss. And the merest trifle

sent her off into a burst of hearty, joyous laughter. And she did look extremely beautiful, in her early spring dress of English make, her black fur pelisse, and that great black hat of hers under which her eyes glittered like sapphires!

She was enraptured to have so romantic a lovers' meeting. A meeting in the town did not appeal to her; she longed for something out of the common, and hankered after the feeling of the uncertain. That was why she had hit on the idea of a woodland meeting, and enjoyed its realization with all the impetuosity of a tired-out soul. So she noticed neither Charles's silence, nor his monosyllabic replies, nor his frequent glances at his watch.

What did anything matter? She was with him. At times he kissed her with such passion that he made a film come over her eyes. And she could tell him of her love, and time and again fling herself into his arms with an overpowering thrill, all the sweeter for the fear of being discovered. From instant to instant she would look round in terror. When the trees murmured louder, or the crows, flapping their wings, flew townwards with a shriek, she would creep very close to him, affrighted and trembling all over, till he dispelled her fears with a kiss and the assurance that all was right.

"Have you a revolver, Charles?" she asked once.

"I have."

"Do let me see it, my sweet, my only one. You see, I shall fear less now. You would not leave me, would you?"

"Of course not. But what do you fear?"

"I do not know, but I am much afraid—very, very much afraid"; and she would glance swiftly round at the wood.

"There are no robbers here, I give you my word."

"None, say you? and I read the other day that a man going home from work was stabbed in this very wood. That people are murdered here I know for certain," and she trembled all over.

"Be easy: no one shall harm you while I am by your side."

"I know you for a very brave man. I love you, Charles; but kiss me—kiss me very, very hard!"

He kissed her.

Suddenly, "Hark!" she said, shrinking back. "Somebody is calling!"

There was nobody. The wood murmured, and the trees were bending and bowing to and fro with slow rhythmical movements, as if to chase away the wisps of mist that were coming in from the country, more rapidly now, but thinner and thinner; for the rain had begun to fall in earnest and beat upon the wood as with showers of corn, and drummed on the iron roof of the restaurant.

Charles opened his umbrella and they went under a tree that gave them a little shelter.

"You will get wet. I am so sorry you are exposed to such weather."

"But I like it so much, Charles."

Taking off a glove, she held out her hand to the rain.

"Now you will catch cold and fall ill."

"I don't mind; I should lie in bed and think of you only and always."

"Ah, but then I should not see you at all."

"I don't want that.—I had not seen you these three days; I could not bear waiting any longer.—Were you too thinking of me?"

"I could not help it, could think of nothing else."

"Ah, how sweet!—Do you love me still, Charles?"

"Can you doubt me?"

"No. I do believe your love will last for ever."

"For ever!"

He was endeavouring to soften his voice and bring a look of joy into his face, but was hardly successful. His galoshes were filled with mud and water, his shoes soaked through and through; and there were such heaps of work awaiting him!

They spent an hour together thus. She would not return till her face and hands were so very cold that he had to warm them with kisses. At parting, he asked whether there had really been any affair of such great importance. She flung her arms round his neck.

"I love you. I wanted to tell you that. I wanted you to know."

At last they parted; but she came back several times to bid him farewell once more, to assure him of her love, and to entreat him not to leave the wood until she had reached her carriage, now awaiting her in a lane, with palings on either side.

The sirens announcing dinner-time were rending the air with their clamour when Charles got into his carriage and went off to the office at a gallop. There he found no one in but Bucholc and Horn. The rest had gone to dinner.

"You stress your words too much when you speak," Bucholc was saying to Horn, raising himself up in his easy-chair.

"I can't speak in any other fashion," Horn answered back.

"Then you must learn; the way you speak is intolerable to me."

"To me, Mr. President, what you say is the reverse of interesting," Horn returned, apparently calm; but his lips twitched convulsively, and his blue eyes seemed to have suddenly turned black.

"To whom are you speaking?"

"To you, Mr. President."

"Mr. Horn, I warn you that I am not a very patient man, and that I——"

"I don't wish to know whether you are or not; it's no concern of mine."

"When I, Bucholc, am speaking, don't you cut in!"

"When I, Horn, am speaking, why should you not hold your tongue? I see no reason."

Bucholc started up, but a sudden twinge made him take in his breath with a gasp. For a while he rubbed his bandaged legs, breathing heavily, and shaking with passion, yet silent and striving for self-control.

Horn, who with malice prepense, nay, quite methodically, had been working Bucholc into a rage, laid down his ledgers, took up his pencils, india-rubber, and other belongings,

wrapped them up in paper, and put them quietly into his pocket. All this he did with much deliberation, eyeing Boroviecki the while. The latter, astounded at such behaviour and at so bewildering an altercation, had no idea what to do. To side with Horn was impossible, first because he did not know what the row was all about; and then because the friendship of Bucholc meant more to him than Horn's. So he stared as though shocked at Horn, who was quietly putting on his galoshes, and smiling, though with livid lips.

At last Bucholc hissed: "You are no longer in my service. I discharge you!"

"I don't care a damn for you or your service."

And he put on the other galosh.

"Kundel!" Bucholc said, addressing Augustus almost in a whisper, and grasping his stick firmly, "out of doors with him!"

"Pray, Augustus, let me be, and don't begin, or I'll break both your ribs and your master's."

"Curse the fellow!" Bucholc shrieked. "Turn him out!"

"You shut up!" Horn shouted, catching up a heavy chair, ready to use it as a weapon on anyone who touched him. Then he sent it crashing under the desk and strode out, slamming the glazed door with such violence that all the panes went flying.

Boroviecki had slipped out before the explosion. Bucholc, almost beside himself with fury, fell back in his chair and groaned. He had but strength enough to press an electric button and call for the police in a husky, strangled voice. The footman stood there, terrified and bewildered, gazing at Bucholc's livid face, and his mouth, distorted with agony.

At last the old man came to himself, looked round the empty office, settled himself in the arm-chair, and, after a considerable pause, called in a gentle voice: "Augustus!"

Augustus approached, but in great fear: his master never spoke so gently, nor called him by his name, but when he was at his very worst.

"Mr. Horn: where is he?"

"Master turned him out, and he is gone."

"And where is Mr. Boroviecki?"

"He only just looked in and went out again. He had to go to dinner, for it is past twelve, and the sirens sounded for noon some time ago." The poor fellow was lengthening out his explanation on purpose to put off a little the trouble that was coming.

"Good. Come and stand here by me."

He was shaking all over, but obeyed.

"I am listening, master," he said in a subdued, humble voice.

"I ordered you to drive that dog out; why did you not?"

"But, master, he went by himself," he tried to explain, shedding tears.

"Silence!"

Augustus shrank away instinctively.

"Stand here! Nearer!"

And as the man, overwhelmed with fear, but obedient, edged closer, his master, catching him by the arm, set to cudgelling him with might and main. Augustus did not so much as attempt wriggling out of his grasp; he only averted his face to hide the tears that streamed down his clean-shaven cheeks. And when Bucholc, half-dead with exhaustion, left off thrashing the man, and lay groaning in his chair, Augustus proceeded to wrap his master's legs again in the flannel bandages that had slipped off during his tempest of rage.

Charles had in the mean time withdrawn to get his dinner, not being desirous of witnessing a scene.

The place where he dined was in Spacerova Street, and was called the Colony. It had been opened by about fifteen women, whom their destiny had driven from various parts of the country to the streets of Lodz. Most of them had been wrecked by the storms of life: widows, ex-landowners, ex-capitalists, ex-ladies, old maids and youthful maidens, who had come to get work here. They were united by their common misery, which had abolished from amongst them all differences of class and caste.

They had rented a whole flat in Spacerova Street, and ar-

ranged it as a sort of hotel. A passage ran the length of the flat to a large chamber at one end, which served as the dining-room for all. Charles, Moritz, and several other acquaintances took dinner there regularly.

He had come somewhat late; the large round dinner-table was almost full. All were eating quickly and in silence. There was no time for talk. They all lent an attentive ear, often with heads raised, expecting the signal for work to recommence.

Charles took a seat near the lady who had presided in the box at the play on Saturday night, shook hands right and left, nodded to those farther off, and set to without a word.

"Has Horn not come in yet?" somebody asked Mrs. Lapinska across the table.

"He is rather late to-day," she replied.

"He is not coming till this evening," was the information volunteered by a very young girl with short hair, which she from time to time tossed back.

"What's the reason, Kama?" they asked.

"He was to have a row with Bucholc to-day, and leave his service."

"Did he tell you that?" Boroviecki eagerly inquired.

"He had planned to do it."

"As I see, he never does anything he has not planned. He is method's very self."

"I saw him once, quarrelling with Müller at our office."

"And I," Charles put in, "just now left him quarrelling with Bucholc."

"What—what was it took place, Mr. Charles?" Kama cried, and ran round to him, putting her tiny childlike hand on his head, and caressingly entreating him to speak.

"Charles, do pray tell us all about it," she begged.

Several heads were raised to listen.

"Nothing really had taken place when I left, and I don't know what occurred after. They were at daggers drawn, and Horn was very offensive—quite insulting, in fact."

"Ha ha! Hurrah for Horn—a brave fellow!"

"Not so much bravery as a common thoughtless love

of squabbling," Charles said, in marked disagreement.

The women all looked at Kama, who had shrunk away from Boroviecki, and who, flushed and indignant, was eyeing him angrily. "You must not speak of Horn like that!"

"I will not withdraw, but I'll prove what I have said. If the man wanted to leave, and had any grievance against Bucholc, he might very well have laid it before him, and spoken out freely; for Bucholc is intelligent, and easier to get on with than the others. What was the use, then, of such a scene? Merely to show off, and make folks in Lodz talk about him.—A very valiant deed it was, too, was it not? to go insulting a sick man!—And mind: Bucholc, until he dies, will never forgive him that; he will make him pay for it; he has a good memory."

"Until he dies!" Kama cried out excitedly. "That won't be long, thank God! I hear he's extremely ill."

"Kama, how can you speak so?"

"Besides," Kama went on, "Horn does not care a fig. He'll go back to Warsaw, his home, where he may defy Bucholc."

"Bucholc has a long arm, that he can stretch out even to Warsaw. He may find how to—interest—certain people in Horn's doings. Yes, Horn may find himself in a very cold place indeed, and for long enough to cool down thoroughly."

Somewhere not far away a siren uttered its shrill blast.

One after the other the men got up from table, leaving their meal unfinished, and with a quick bow (having no time for leave-taking) they rushed away, putting on their overcoats while going downstairs, and made for their several factories. The roar of the sirens was heard over all the town, like the booming of a cannonade, calling everybody to work. Each man knew the note of his own siren; at that hateful sound everyone left what he was about and ran to be in time.

The only man who, besides Boroviecki, could disregard the signal was Malinovski, a young technicist in Shaya's office. He was very taciturn during the meal, which he interrupted only to jot down some notes in a book lying by his plate.

Occasionally he darted a glance in the direction of Mrs. Stephanie. Then he would utter a low sigh, arrange his hair, make bread pellets, and sit with his eyes fixed upon them. His face was pale as raw percale; his hair and moustache were ashen-hued, and his odd green eyes never quite of the same shade. He attracted universal attention, not only for being a strikingly handsome man, but for being remarkably shy and reserved.

"Auntie! has Mr. Malinovski said anything to-day?" Kama demanded. She felt a special pleasure in teasing him daily. Mrs. Lapinska, who was engaged in conversation with Boroviecki, made no reply. Malinovski smiled a curiously sympathetic smile and again took some notes in his book.

One by one the women at table got up and withdrew, for every one was engaged in some industry or business.

In the antechamber the bell was heard to ring violently.

"It is my man Matthew, with a telegram!" Charles exclaimed at the sound, for he knew very well what Matthew's ring was like.

The man entered at once with a telegram from Moritz.

"It has only just come in, and here we are!" he reported.

"When we have muddy boots, we should always wipe them in the hall before we come in," Kama said, snubbing Matthew severely.

Boroviecki, indifferent to the glances of curiosity that followed him, took the telegram to the window, and read:

"Good.—Knoll, Zuker, Mendelsohn, buying.—Sent off first consignment this morning.—Store it with me.—Fifteen per cent dearer.—Supplies scanty.—Back in a week."

Charles read the message through with devouring interest; his satisfaction was visible.

"Good news, Mr. Charles?" Mrs. Stephanie inquired, raising her pale blue eyes to his beaming face.

"Very good."

"From your fiancée?" Kama chirped.

"A nice fiancée! From Moritz in Hamburg."

He rose to take leave.

"But why? You have not to answer the call of the siren."

"All the same, I never was so busy as now."

"Very true. For us you have no time at all. These last three Sundays you have not been once with us in the evening," said Stephanie, the lady with the pale blue eyes, with a touch of reproach in her voice.

"Mrs. Stephanie, I cannot bring myself to believe my absence has been noticed; I am not so conceited as that. And I am quite sure that, when I missed those delightful evenings, I lost far more than you did."

"That's as it may be," she replied in a low voice, giving him her hand, which he kissed with great fervour as he went away.

Kama stopped him in the hall. "Mr. Charles, I have a request to make, and a very great one."

"Please tell it to me; it is already granted, I give you my word. Speak, little one."

Kama kept her eyes away from him; the ringlets of her short curly hair came down over her forehead, and she did not toss them back. She stood against the entrance door, with clenched hands, trying for some time to muster up courage.

"Do not be so much against Horn; give him help. He is so good, so noble—and so unhappy here in Lodz! So unhappy! Everybody is against him, everybody makes fun of him—and I will not have it so. It pains me very much.—I should be so delighted if—— And I will not have things as they are," she concluded, and, weeping bitterly, fled into the parlour, losing one of her slippers on the way there.

"That little one is in love," he thought, and stopped short for an instant. Then he picked up the slipper, followed the girl to the parlour, opened the door, and stood dumbfounded with astonishment.

Both her slippers were off, and she was running round the table in pursuit of a tiny little Italian dog which had got the other slipper in its mouth and had made off with it.

She laughed almost to split her sides as she ran to catch the dog. He was too cunning for her, always managing to dodge her and escape at the last moment; and when the

pursuit grew slack, he would drop the slipper and bark.

"Piccolo, give it up—give it to Kama! Be obedient, Piccolo!" she would say, coaxing him. But as she came nearer and crept closer, the cunning dog was too quick for her; he snatched the slipper up and ran off again.

"Well," Boroviecki remarked, "I shall give you back the slipper I have found, though I might have kept it."

"Aunt! Aunt!" she cried out in consternation, and flopped down in the middle of the room, to hide her stockinged feet.

He left the slipper on the floor and went out; she had really been very funny.

He first went over to Moritz's office, to see in which warehouse the cotton was to be stored. On his way back, he met Kozlovski, the acquaintance he had made at Murray's.

"Good-day, Director," said he. extending a hand that wore a then fashionable red glove.

"Good-day."

"I'll go with you a little way."

As he spoke, he tilted his silk hat a little back with the knob of his stick.

"Certainly; I shall be much pleased.—How is business getting on?"

"Splendidly, I tell you. I have a grand idea, and only want money to bring it out.—Ah! that's a turnip, not a girl!" he cried, looking round at a woman, and fixed his hat firmly on his forehead with much self-satisfaction.

"What! are you going to do business in that line?"

"Quite impossible here in Lodz. Why, it was yesterday that I for the first time saw a pretty woman. She therefore cannot be of the town, of course."

"Still, there are pretty women in Lodz."

"Give you my word, don't agree with you. I am always in town, always looking about me; for without women—and fine ones too—life is not worth living."

"Well, and the one of yesterday?" Charles said, drawing him out; the young spark was beginning to entertain him.

"Aha! you shall know. Well, I was going down Piotrovska Street, on my way from the Grand Hotel. I look, and there

comes, straight down upon me, a woman. Her costume—very *chic;* her lips—dainty; her figure—magnificent; her hair—pitch-black; her eyes—like smoky sapphires; her hips—a four-square rampart; her stature—willowy. And there you are! Not a woman, a goddess! And her mouth—I tell you, Director, is like the most delicious cutlet!"

"Haven't you had your dinner yet?" Charles interrupted.

"Why do you ask?" the other demanded curtly, pushing his silk hat to the back of his head.

"Because your simile smells very much of the kitchen."

"Ah! Director, I see you are a merry fellow," Kozlovski cried, with a friendly tap on the stomach.

"Well, then, I turn round on the spot and follow her. She walks on and on; I after her. Beyond the New Market-place—down there—there was mud on the side-walk. So my little lady puts her sunshade under her arm, holding up her dress with both hands; and on she goes! It was a splendid sight. Legs quite divine; and her feet! I could have kissed them. I look round at her on every side; and on she goes still, making out she does not see me.—I went on in front of her, stopped outside a shop, and when she came up, looked into her eyes. Such a ravishing smile!—she exhaled fragrance—her eyes burnt me up to a cinder.—On we go; she first—I close behind. Who can she be? Her manner—rather suspicious; shows off too much that she is taking no notice of me.—Now, I've a sure and certain system to judge women by; so I began to look her over more accurately. She seemed very elegant, but I saw her hair was untidy. One point against her! Her dress was costly: best woollen cloth, well made and right for the season; a point in her favour. Her hat, certainly from Paris; another good point. But, looking more carefully, what do I see just above her boots? Stockings of quite vulgar reddish-brown Scotch worsted—*fil d'Écosse!* I was intrigued; they ought to have been of silk. Another bad point."

"Were you ever engaged in a ladies' department?" Charles asked, somewhat slightingly.

"Never. But in these matters I am an expert. I, my dear

sir, can at once, and from a mere inspection of wardrobe and toilet details, tell who she is, where from, and how much she has."

"Then who was she, that beauty of yours?"

Charles took care not to let Kozlovski know that, from the description given, he had recognized Mrs. Zuker.

"You see, I'm not sure; it's the first time my method has been at fault. Her hat, her face, bespoke a woman of good society, a millionaire; her dress, a well-to-do person—a woman with a carriage; but the *fil d'Écosse* stockings told of a schoolmistress, or a petty tradesman's wife, or an official's. And her under petticoat—for I caught a glimpse of it—was of cheap yellow silk stuff! Even that's nothing; but it was trimmed with—*cotton lace!*" He spoke the last two words almost in a tone of horror. "Think of it, Director: cotton lace!"

"Well, but what does this indicate?"

"That she's shoddy—a mere streetwalker, or, at best, a servantwoman well dressed up.—That finished me. I had no more use for her. I glanced at her for the last time. Something must have offended her, for she let her dress down—in the mud!—And walked across the street!"

"And did you follow her any farther?"

"No. She was not worth while. Had my previous estimate been at fault, when she let down her dress and dragged it through the mire, that sufficed to convince me she was nothing but a common Lodzian wench. Not even a Warsaw seamstress would have done anything of the sort. They have nice ankles, and like them to be seen. And then, to bedraggle her dress—fie, for shame!"

He made a disdainful grimace, and came to a standstill.

"To our next meeting; I must go in here," said Charles, and to get rid of him entered the confectioner's shop at the corner of Meyer's Passage.

Once there, the idea suddenly came to him of giving a treat to the Colony. He purchased a large tray full of cakes, and a box of dainty sweets, which he dispatched to Kama with the accompanying note.

"Little one, cry no more. Share these sweets with Piccolo, who must not be so naughty, nor steal your slippers next time. And be sure that Charles, bad boy though he is, will do all he can on behalf of H——."

He ordered the whole to be forwarded to Spacerova Street. "Let them profit a little by my good fortune!"

So satisfied was he with himself and the world that he bowed right and left to all his many acquaintances, hurrying away from dinner to factories and offices; and it was with a feeling of compassion that he caught sight of Kozlovski, following women on the other side of the street, and every now and then peeping into their faces. The fellow looked so ridiculous, with his overcoat shaped just like a common sack; and his light-coloured trousers, pretentiously turned up to an outrageous extent above his patent-leather boots; and that cylindrical hat of his, quite on the back of his head; and that face, like a pug-dog's, but with an ever-varying expression!

The side-walks were thronged with working-people, hastening to their factories at the call of the detested siren resounding through the air; some of them were sprinting on and finishing their dinner at the same time. The clatter of wooden soles filled the street with a noise that ceased only when the great wave of grimy, dingy, tattered, and wretched-looking workers had rolled away down side streets and through gateways.

A funeral train was passing down one side of the thoroughfare. A tiny coffin of plain deal, marked with a blue cross, was borne by four striplings, clad in black, following the sexton—a hunchbacked man, dressed in a blue cape, over which towered his bald and withered head, as he went on, bearing a crucifix—and plodded, splashing drowsily, through the deep mud. Behind the coffin, but close to the side-walk, came several children with umbrellas. The cabs and carriages and huge trucks laden with wares had driven them from the middle of the street and bespattered the tiny coffin with thick black mud, that an old woman wiped off at intervals with her apron.

No one had any time to notice the funeral train. Only a workman here and there doffed his cap, or a woman crossed herself and breathed a prayer—and went on their way, driven onward by the sound of the sirens, which like sharp-edged blades, ripped the air—that grey, ponderous air, saturated with smoke-wreaths, pouring in foul streaks from numberless chimneys, and floating down to the roofs and into the streets, with odours that were hard to bear.

Boroviecki was looking about him for a cab, the sooner to arrive at his factory, when he heard himself saluted from a passing carriage. It was Mada Müller, together with her brother, who, in a red *Burschen* cap, and his green and red corporation scarf on his breast, sat lolling back in the carriage, with a large black poodle on his lap.

"And what about the books? The titles, you know—that you promised me," were her first words on meeting.

Her eyes, with those golden lashes, looked into Boroviecki's.

"I must frankly confess they have slipped my memory. But I'll make amends, and promise solemnly you shall have them this very day."

"You're not reliable; I must have a better guarantee," she chirruped gaily.

"I'll give you my signature."

"Won't do! A signature costs but little." She laughed outright, amused by the mock solemnity—hand on heart—with which he had promised.

"Then I'll get some big firm to back me."

"Would Mrs. Likiert do?" she blurted out, and immediately hid her face in her muff, dismayed at having uttered words she never meant to have said.

"I told her lots of times that she was a goose, and she would never believe me," Wilhelm growled.

"Which way are you going?" she said, anxious to undo the mischief she had done, and raising her face, now beetroot-coloured.

"Why, to my duties," he answered without embarrassment,

though the mention of Mrs. Likiert's name had touched him to the quick.

"Shall we take Mr. Boroviecki there with us?"

"All right, Mada."

"I should be very glad—if you wish," she said to Charles.

"My answer is to get in."

"Wilhelm," she cried, asserting herself, "you make room for Mr. Boroviecki! Sit in front with your dog."

"No, thanks," said Charles; "I prefer a low seat, and shall be more at ease.—A very fine dog!"

"Cost three thousand marks. Got a medal at the Dog Show."

"Then it must be quite a paragon."

"A nasty dog! Barks at me, and has quite torn my new apron."

"And did you not punish it for a crime of the sort?"

"Wilhelm would not let me beat it."

"And where are you two going together?"

"Mada wants to look in at the Artists' Hall; of course she'll buy some stupid little picture.—I wanted Cæsar to get a little fresh air. He and I are both too much cooped up at home."

"When are you returning to Berlin?"

Here Mada fell a-laughing loud and heartily. "He has been going off this whole month, and quarrelling every day about it with Papa."

"Mada, you silly girl! be quiet and do not talk about matters you can't understand," he began, so angrily that the scar on his face glowed crimson. Then he straightened out his big limbs and sat up, very much out of sorts.

"Pray, Mr. Charles, do you too think me a silly girl? Everybody at home says I'm that, and I shall end by believing it myself. And yet I know a thing or two.—For instance, Wilhelm has been making debts in Berlin, and Papa won't pay them! And that's why he stays on here."

"Mada, I shall get down and tell Father this instant what you have chattered about!"

"Do by all means; Mr. Charles and I shall be more comfortable without you.—But you have not answered my question, Mr. Charles."

"Because there can be no answer to such a question as that."

"You won't tell me the truth."

"In this case, because I do not know it."

"When shall I get the titles?"

"This very day."

"Don't believe you. I'd rather you brought them yourself as a punishment."

"If *that's* a punishment, then how splendid will my reward be, when I get it!"

"You shall have a first-rate coffee," she answered, with great *naïveté*.

Wilhelm burst into a loud guffaw, and Cæsar barked in chorus.

"What silly thing have I been saying?" she asked, her face quite scarlet.

"Mr. Wilhelm is laughing at the dog.—See how droll it looks!"

"You are a good kind man; so Papa says, and so does everybody at home but Wilhelm."

"Mada!"

"I am so comfortable here that it's a pity to get down, but here's my factory.—Many thanks; see you later."

"We shall be expecting you Sunday afternoon."

"I remember. A pity to-morrow is not Sunday!"

Mada laughed merrily, and bent a very friendly look on him.

For some time he stood still and observed her looking back at him. "Why is not my Anne a millionaire?—Can't be helped," he thought, entering the factory, which, after the midday recess, had quite resumed its customary state of frantic activity.

From one of the side buildings, there came a platoon of the volunteer fire-brigade. Carts, fire-engines, and water-barrels were all rushing on with great speed and the utmost

order, and under the wheels and the horses' hoofs the mud —even in the solid macadam beneath—lay open in long, deep grooves. Workers who had volunteered as firemen were riding along on the carts, busily putting on their uniforms.

"Where is the fire, Mr. Richter?" Charles inquired of the head officer, one of the foremen in the cotton mills, whom the factory porter was accoutring in his lodge, and trying to dress and gird up.

"Albert Grosman's place is on fire.—Squeeze a bit more!" he cried out to the janitor, unable to get his portly belly within the bounds of the officer's uniform. It was rather too tight, and several buttons had flown off in the process.

"How long on fire?"

"Half an hour, but in all likelihood it will burn down.—Tighter, Mr. Shmit."

"Why in such a hurry then?"

"Grosglik phoned to our old man, imploring him not to let Grosman's place be burnt down; of course because he has a spite against him."

"But why?—Ah, I see: he would have the man ruined."

"The third fire to-day!"

"All of them factories?"

"All."

"Yes; making up for what they lost by the late failures."

"Blast them all, those jail-birds, those sons of dogs! They make mints of money out of this, and we have to rush from fire to fire, with tongues lolling out of our throats, like tired dogs!"

"What's to be done? Without a fire they could never strike a balance."

"Good afternoon—ugh! I shall burst," he said, as he waddled out to the cab in waiting outside the factory gate, and at once drove off at a gallop after his brigade, which had set out before and could now be seen at the end of the street, with their brazen helmets, bright as samovars.

"Oho! the season promises to be hot—*burning* hot!" Charles mused, as he went to the telephone to acquaint Max Baum with the contents of the telegram.

Before he had got there, another telephone message interfered with him. It was Travinski, who desired to confer with Charles on important business.

"I shall be expecting you in the printing department," he answered, and plunged at once into the whirlpool of the factory.

Where he went, there was an endless line of machines in motion, of trucks piled with many-coloured goods and moving each in another direction. And in this forest of belts and wheels and bands and men; in this tumult of vapours, inferno-like, which rose in clouds above the washing-machines; in this chaos of mingled buzzings, quivering trills, and shrieks and clanking noises, and of frantic, palpitating energy which carried everything and everybody away with it, and seemed almost to move the firm walls with its intense force, exerted to the very utmost: here Charles dived deep down into the wild impetuous life of the factory. He made the round of all departments, examined the stuffs produced, issued his orders, and was off again to another place, giving up to entire oblivion whatsoever was not in connexion with the factory.

After the state of nervous excitement he had gone through, he now experienced a sense of relief, and let himself be carried on with delight in the torrent of tremendous forces accumulated around him. His tired feeling had passed away, and he felt calm and serene in these infernal regions of the factory, as if he had inhaled the countless streams of energy continually pouring forth from both men and machines, and surging in upon every side.

Having inspected all the departments, he returned to the "Kitchen." Murray was in his little den, separated from the rest of the place by a glazed partition, and making tests with a tiny printing-machine. One had just been a failure: the colours had spread over the stuff and blurred the pattern. He was in a fury; smiling blandly indeed, but his face was grey with disappointment, and he bared his long, yellow teeth, like a bulldog's. Wiping his hands on the apron he was accoutred with, he cursed under his breath.

"Here I have been slaving since noon, and I positively cannot get a fast dye!"

Boroviecki set to work with a will to help him, but was interrupted by the appearance of Travinski, in such a pitiable state that he did not so much as remember the usual salutations. From the very threshold he asked for a minute of private conversation.

"Let's go to the roller warehouse; no one is in there."

Charles went first, leading the way.

Travinski had the air of a man in a dream. His blue eyes were wandering about; his clear-cut, noble-looking features were stamped with care and had stiffened into an expression of bitterness, visible in his sunken eyes and the corners of his mouth, which his short moustache failed to conceal. He was an old friend and college companion of Charles, and at the time the owner of a rather large cotton mill.

"Well, are you going to say anything?" Charles asked, as the two entered a large high-ceilinged hall, provided with tiers of iron shelves, glittering with multitudes of brazen printing rollers, like great rolls of papyrus, and covered, as if with hieroglyphs, with patterns in relief that served to print the goods.

"I shall speak presently," he said, sitting down upon a bale. He took off his hat, propped his head against the wall, and sat awhile in silence, gathering strength to speak.

"Are you ill? You do look poorly."

"How can a bankrupt look otherwise?" Travinski replied in a hard voice.

"What's the matter? Have you been cheated again?"

"Worse than that: down, and without any prospect of getting up again."

"What do you mean?" Charles said, feigning surprise; he had already heard that Travinski was shaky.

"That crash which has ruined stronger firms, and caused the fire at Grosman's works, has not spared me either. There are bills of exchange I have to meet on Saturday. To meet them I have nothing but bills issued by firms just gone bankrupt. That is, I have nothing. Yes: to be met on Satur-

day—and I cannot meet them! So I am done for. Mine is damnable luck indeed—it's the third time I have been down—on the very brink of ruin; and I feel that if I go down this time, it is all over with me: that I shall not rise again."

"What are your liabilities?"

"Fifteen thousand."

"What, fail for so small a sum?"

"Small indeed, but I have not got it. I have tried to borrow, but could not. No one in Lodz has any ready money just now; the panic is such that yesterday Grosglik refused to lend twenty thousand—and to Rozenberg! That speaks for itself. No private person, scarcely any bank, is willing to discount the bills even of the strongest firms. Everyone is afraid, for there's an earthquake in Lodz, and every now and then a house totters and falls—and there's no knowing what may happen. Besides, the stagnation is dreadful this season. I have yarn worth ten thousand, ready for sale in my warehouse; no one even makes an offer. The regular purchasers have diminished their output by fifty per cent; and I have to work on, paying my men, and get my living and drive my business; if it stands still one instant, I am lost! And on the top of this wretched state of things these late failures have come—to finish me off! Hard times indeed! Not for the security of the factory with all its plant and wares, and my personal honour and integrity thrown in, can I get anyone to lend me fifteen thousand!"

"Have you tried Bucholc? He assisted Wolkman yesterday."

"Yes, out of hate for Shaya. Besides, I can't ask that damn German for help. It would be loathsome, grovelling."

"What would that signify? His assistance is sure to save you."

"No. He knows my opinion of him."

"But my good word would be of weight with Bucholc."

"Thanks, but I cannot accept it. It would not only be contrary to my principles; it would be a dirty trick for me to beg the help of a man whom I abhor, and am willing to tell so to his face."

Charles lost patience. "A nobleman's logic," he observed, and lit a cigarette.

"I admit," said the other, "only one sort of logic: not a nobleman's, but that of any honest man."

"But recollect: you are in Lodz. As I see, you perpetually forget that you have the delusion of doing business with civilized people of central Europe. Whereas Lodz is a forest, a jungle—in which, if you have good strong claws, you may fearlessly go forward and make away with your neighbours; else they will fall upon you, suck you dry, and toss your carcass away afterwards."

Travinski sat silent. His head was propped up against a large printing roller. His eyes were following the steps of Charles, who, in the excitement of his outburst, paced swiftly up and down the narrow passage separating one tier of shelves from another.

On every side, the factory was in motion, and its dull roar audible like the everlasting murmur of the sea. The walls vibrated; the belts and bands which passed across the room at the ceiling, transmitting power to the adjoining chambers, were humming and buzzing, while the still harsher discordancy of the turning-lathes in the next room upset Travinski's shattered nerves still more.

"What will you do?" Boroviecki said at last, breaking silence.

"I have come to ask you for a loan. I know you have the money. But believe me, if my necessity were not so extreme, I should never have ventured to ask."

"I cannot. I am utterly unable. True, I have money, but you must have heard that I am starting a factory; and besides that, I have other irons in the fire—and they do not leave me free to dispose of any money at all."

"Look here: a bill at one month's date only—on the security of my factory and everything I possess. This would, at the very worst, suffice to cover the sum lent."

"I believe it would, but I am not going to lend it. The fact is, you have no luck, and I should simply be afraid to do business with you. You may hold out, or you may not—who

knows? But I have got to live—and to start my factory. Possibly I might keep you afloat for a year or so, and go down with you in the end."

"You are frank at any rate," was the reply, in a derisive whisper.

"My dear fellow, why should I lie to you? I cannot bear a foolish lie, any more than I can bear that sentimental sympathy for every misfortune which only helps the sufferer to die at ease, with tears of pity shed over him. I would help you if I could; as I can't, I don't. Surely I am not to give up my overcoat, even to a naked man, if I should die of cold without it."

"You're right; no more need be said. Excuse me for troubling you."

"Do you feel hurt?" Charles said, struck by Travinski's tone.

"No. You have put the question so clearly that I quite understand your refusal; it may have pained me, but I understand it perfectly."

He rose to go out.

"Will you not settle with your creditors?"

"No. That is, no 'playta,' but an honest bankruptcy."

"There might be another way out."

"Tell it to me. I shall be delighted."

"Are you heavily insured?"

"Sufficiently. I insured in autumn, after the attempted arson."

"A pity you succeeded in preventing it. By revenging himself that workman of yours would have done you a great service."

"Are you speaking seriously?"

"Very much so. As much as in pointing out to you that Grosman's works are on fire, and that we shall certainly find to-morrow that Felix Fishbin, Richter, Fuchs, and others, have done the same. What do you say to that?"

"That I am not and will not be an incendiary and a swindler."

"But I am not advising you to do as they do. I simply

show you how your rivals manage to keep their heads above water. You can never hold your own against them."

"Ha! Then I'm lost. When I can fight no more, I'll blow my brains out."

"What of your wife?" Charles asked hastily, for he saw in Travinski's eyes the steely glint of desperation.

Travinski shuddered.

"Now, I have an idea. Do you know old Mr. Baum?"

"We are neighbours, and on very friendly terms."

"Go to him; tell him all openly. He's such a queer sort of manufacturer that he is sure to help you. My life on it, since he knows you for the man you are, he will help."

"Really the idea is good; and I shall be none the worse for his refusal."

"Surely not, and the trial is worth making. He is unique among the mill-owners of Lodz. He might have been a millionaire many times over, but never would stoop to pick the millions up. He has paid hundreds of thousands for others, he hates big industrials, is a hidebound man of routine, a nondescript, a freak of nature, as they call him; in reality, only a lunatic, and a survival from the bygone days of hand-spinners and weavers."

They parted in silence. Charles noticed his coldness in taking farewell; and, watching him from the window as he went, he felt an odd twinge of pity for the man. "A whimpering relic of our old nobility!" he thought aloud or nearly so, in order to drive from his soul a faint sense of remorse that had sprung up and was growing apace. He would give Travinski no assistance, and felt his decision to be completely justified; he nevertheless was not pleased at having refused. He had continually before his eyes the sight of that blond head, so noble of aspect, yet stamped and branded, as it were, with the marks of unceasing care and trouble. He felt that he ought to have assisted him; that he would have lost nothing and done a great service. And the gnawing pain within him increased as time went by.

"What does it matter to me, if one more man goes to the devil?" he said to himself, as he made his way to the cloth-

shearing-chamber. The place was crammed up to the ceiling with white cotton goods, which were being conveyed to these machines and thrust between two sharp blades, one running in a spiral round about a cylinder, the other quite straight and flat; and by them both sides of the material pulled forward were shorn with mathematical accuracy, down to the tissue itself, of all the cotton fluff and down that had remained after the weaving process.

In this chamber, white, cool, almost silent, about fifteen women were at work. The air was filled with an impalpable cotton dust, produced by the shearing operation, which hung about the room, sifting its white down over machines and workers and trembling in thick flocculent masses around the transmission belts that turned the shearing-machines and disappeared at the ceiling.

Boroviecki merely looked round, and was about to enter the elevator on his way to the ground-floor, when a terrible human cry was heard for an instant.

One of the driving-wheels had caught hold of the blouse of a workman who had incautiously come too near, whirled him aloft, flung him upon the machine, spun him round and round, crumpled him up, broken him on the machine, crushed him, smashed him, and thrown the shattered mass aside, never stopping in its course for one moment. His blood spurted up to the ceiling, flooded the machine, some of the goods it was shearing, and the working-women who stood by. An immense outcry followed; the machine was stopped, but all was over now. A bleeding bulk hung on the axle of the driving-wheel; other pieces had fallen heavily on the floor from various parts of the machine; they still were quivering with the tremors of the life that had been there. The man was literally torn to pieces; it was absurd to think of doing anything. He lay like a great lump of flesh—a bloody stain on the white ground of raw percale stuff.

Women wailed low; some of the older workmen knelt down by the side of the remains, and began to say aloud the Litany for the dying; the workmen took off their caps; some

made the sign of the cross; all gathered round the dead man. There was no anger in their eyes, only the numbness of stunned apathy. The chamber was hushed, except for the weeping of the women, and the dull murmur of the neighbouring rooms, where everybody was working as usual.

As soon as the factory surgeon on duty came in, Boroviecki withdrew. The foreman of the department also came hurrying in. He, seeing the workers idle and crowding round the remains, cried out from the doorway: "Back to the machines!"

And they all dispersed, like birds at the swoop of a hawk. Presently the machines were all working again—all except that one, blood-stained with the crime it had committed; but workmen at once began to cleanse it.

"Confound it! So much good stuff spoiled!" the foreman cursed at the sight of the percale goods, spotted with gore. And he rated the workmen for their carelessness, and threatened to make the whole chamber pay for the loss.

This Boroviecki did not hear. The elevator had taken him down, quick as lightning, into the dyeing department. The accident had made no impression upon him, accustomed as he was to that sort of thing.

He called Soha, his intended's protégé, who had that day begun his work in the factory, wheeling stuffs about from place to place.

"How are you getting on?"

"Hard at work, sir."

"Well, go on so; but be careful with the machines."

"Ay, those beastly things!" he began, and was about to order his wife to describe how those "beastly things" had that very day torn off a piece of his capote. But his wife was not there, and Boroviecki had passed on, being called away by Bucholc to his office. So he glared sullenly at the transformation wrought in his capote by the machines, scratched his head, and spat in his hands, to push his truck on to the elevator; everybody was crying out at him for blocking the way.

CHAPTER IX

TRAVINSKI went away, much depressed. On his way to Charles, he had been so sure his request would be granted! Like all people in dire straits, he had taken his wish for the reality, and a thing that was to be.

He took a cab and went off straight down Piotrovska Street. He could not think at all; he was broken—unfit for anything, for any movement. So he gave himself up passively to the acrid and all-pervading wave of bitterness that surged within him.

He looked around him—on the dingy town, wet with rain, muddy on the side-walks, swarming with humanity; on the uncountable chimneys, rising straight as poplars above the flat roofs, and vanishing in the lowering gloom, to make their existence known only by clouds of white vapour, hovering over the houses; on the coal-wagons in their hundreds, forming an immense chain of which one extremity was entering some factory or other; on the multifarious conveyances rushing in every direction; at the multitudinous offices and warehouses, those full of people, these piled with goods; and on the strain and stress of life that seethed around him. On all these things he gazed, in something like despair. He felt his own powerlessness: felt that in no long time to come he should drop out of that enormous whirlpool—out of the huge machine called Lodz—like a bit of used-up matter which the monster needed no more.

With impotent aversion he eyed the works with their thousand casements bright in the murky gloaming, and the grand thoroughfare, which—like a great canal—shut in by the smoke and the grey of the dusky sky, poured forth luminous torrents and throbbed with the full strength of life. His eyes

slurred over the sharp outlines of the factory buildings; the electric suns shining outside their courtyards dazzled and hurt them; he was sick of the dull murmur, mighty because never ceasing, that floated into the street from all the mills and workshops; irritated by all that powerful palpitating life; irritated, too, by that terrible consciousness of the dying man whose last glance tells him so many are living still. And in that consciousness his heart was gnawed with envy unutterable.

He could not live in such a world. He could not adapt himself to his environment. So much strength used up! so much trouble taken! so much money laid out, his own and that of others! so many years lived on, full of pain and anguish!—and with what result? He should have to begin all again, from the very beginning; build up the edifice once more, which would finally fall and crush him again.

To sit on in the cab was impossible to one in his state of mind; he got out and went on foot down Piotrovska Street. Following Boroviecki's advice, he was going to see old Mr. Baum, but, fearing a second disappointment, desired to put it off; and moreover this street had for him an unaccountable attraction.

He plunged into the crowd on the side-walk, and drifted on, jostled and pushed. He looked inattentively at the display windows, bought some sweets for his wife at the confectioner's where he was wont to buy things, passed the time of day with a few acquaintances he met there, and went out again, his purchases made, towards those factories beyond whose lighted windows moved the silhouettes of men and machines. So he walked on through the noisy streets, becoming little by little blunted and callous to everything.

There was a ceaseless drizzle, but he did not mind it, nor even so much as put up his umbrella. He saw nothing but the counting-houses full of people, the goods passing by, the factories working at full speed.

"Good-evening, Mr. Travinski."

"Good-evening, Mr. Halpern." And he shook hands with Halpern, a tall man, rather untidily dressed.

"Out for a stroll about the town?"

"Yes, I had a mind for a walk."

"At twilight Lodz is very beautiful. I leave the office daily at this time, in order to get a walk and a look round."

"You are very, very fond of Lodz, I see."

"What would you have? When a man has lived here for fifty-six years, and has it always in sight, and knows everybody, he may well grow fond of it."

"And what's the news?"

"The news? Bad news: such a shower of protested bills as might be purchased by weight. But it's no matter!"

"How's that?"

"The rogues will go to the devil, and Lodz will stay on all the same. Mr. Travinski, I have seen here worse days than these in my time. After bad times, good times return. As it has been, so it will be; so why trouble about it? For the wise, all times are good times."

"And for the honest, when will times be good?" Travinski asked bitterly.

"Bah! my dear sir, for them there is heaven; what do good times matter to them?"

There was no answer, and they walked on in silence.

Halpern, who had his umbrella up because of the rain, continued to eye houses and factories lovingly as they went along. In that thin wan face of his, framed in a grey beard, his great black eyes shone with a phosphorescent glint. His head and features were like a patriarch's, overtopping a gaunt, stooping, skeleton-like frame, wrapped in a long, bedraggled overcoat that hung on his body as on a clothes-horse.

"I know every firm here, every house," Halpern went on to say with strong feeling. "I remember when Lodz had but twenty thousand inhabitants; there are three hundred thousand now! And I shall see it with its half a million; I will not die till then!"

"Provided it does not go down bodily to hell before!" Travinski growled.

"Ha ha! Don't say such ridiculous things, my dear sir. Lodz will stay on. You don't know the place. Have you heard what its turnover was last year? Two hundred and thirty millions of roubles!" he cried enthusiastically. "A fine sum that! Show me another town like it!"

"That's no great reason to praise it so. But you're right; there's not in all Europe such another town—for thieves," was the ill-humoured reply.

"Thieves or not thieves, all the same to me. What I care and wish for is that they may build more houses, more factories, lay out streets, contrive new communications, make new roads. I want Lodz, this Lodz of mine, to be full of magnificent palaces, splendid gardens, lots of movement, lots of commerce, lots of money!"

"Meanwhile I pray Heaven's thunderbolts may blast it! —Good-night, Mr. Halpern."

"Good-night, Mr. Travinski; but I trust this is not your last word about Lodz."

"My very last, and very sincere." And he called a cab.

"Poor wretch!" Halpern said, with scornful pity, and turned back, walking slowly, and gloating over houses, works, shops, storehouses, and passers-by, as one fascinated by the grandeur of the town. Walking on like a man in a trance, he paid no heed to the rain that wetted him in spite of his umbrella, nor to the jostling crowds that pushed him now against the houses, now into the gutter, nor to the carts and cabs that spattered him all over with mud at the crossings.

Travinski went to his home. The house stood at the bottom of a small garden; it faced the factory courtyard, and the side windows looked out on an empty lane. It had only one storey, but, being built in the neo-Gothic style, looked as if it had three. In several windows on the ground-floor the blinds were down, and it was bright inside.

Passing through a suite of rooms, beautifully furnished, warm, comfortable, and full of the aroma of hyacinths in flowerpot-stands, he reached the boudoir. So thick was the

carpet, and so lightly did he tread, that Nina, his wife, did not hear him come in. He retired a step or two, and called out: "Nina!" beyond the *portière*.

"Are you sitting alone so?" he said, taking a seat by her side.

"Who else could there be with me?" she answered in a sad voice.

"You have been crying."

"No, no!" she said in hasty denial, but turning her face away from the light.

"I have seen tears in your eyes."

"It was so sad to be alone!" she whispered, bending close to him and letting her head sink upon his bosom with a gesture of infinite tenderness, her tears welling up again. "I was expecting you; and the rain was so dreary, pattering upon the window-panes, and drumming on the roofs, and bubbling down the spouts, that I was afraid—afraid for you."

"Why afraid?"

"I cannot tell, but I was filled with evil forebodings.—Is all well with you, dear? Nothing the matter with your health?" she asked, putting her arms round his neck.

She stroked his hair, and kissed his delicate blue-veined forehead; her emerald eyes, flecked with golden spots, examined his thin, tired features with alarm. "What makes you sad?" she inquired.

"Awful weather: how can a man help feeling dismal?"

He disengaged himself from her embrace, and walked about the room. There was a fearful struggle in his heart at that moment. He knew that, could he but tell her everything—let her know the truth of their situation—such a confession would indeed be a great relief to him. But he also knew—when he glanced at her beautiful face, bent forward beneath the soft lamplight streaming over her superb auburn hair, touched with gold about the temples—that for nothing in the world would he make that confession.

His steps grew slower, while he inhaled the exquisitely pure atmosphere of his dwelling, with a feeling of relief that had in it something of bitterness as well. He gazed

round with glances of strange import on the elegant furniture, and the many ornaments—works of high art and great value—which they had these last two years collected in various foreign parts, careless of cost; for Nina, an aristocrat by nature, with the fondness of an artist for all things fair, and a soul like a sensitive plant, could not be at ease save amongst beautiful things.

He had never opposed her desires; and, indeed, he was himself fond of art, and loved to be surrounded with such works. But now, when ruin stared him in the face, he was in prey to intense agony—the fear of the morrow that would take from him not only these treasures, but the peace and happiness in which he had lived till now.

"What can I do?" he mused gloomily. Suddenly an idea came to him; he would say: "Father, I need your aid a second time." At the thought he was seized with instantaneous delight, and looked around with joyful triumph. It was fleeting; he saw Nina rise and walk away through the suite of apartments, and followed her with eyes of troubled inquiry.

As he viewed her slender shapely figure, she turned round and smiled at him mysteriously. She came back directly, carrying a longish flat wooden box, that was of considerable weight.

"Can you guess what a surprise I have for you?"

"I cannot even try," he said, turning pale on perceiving the post-office seals upon the box; it contained, he felt sure, some new and costly purchase.

"Brandini, our Florence dealer, has sent us a mosaic tablet that we looked at together last summer. You remember?"

"Did you order it?" he asked.

"Yes, I wanted to do my lord an unexpected pleasure. —Surely you are not displeased, are you?"

"No, no," he said, kissing her hand. "Thanks, thanks with all my heart."

"Open it; we shall both look at it again. I ordered the smaller and cheaper of the two, and it's incredibly cheap."

"Is the bill here?"

"Here it is: two thousand two hundred lire. Dirt cheap, isn't it?"

"Yes. It is indeed dirt cheap," he returned, as he undid the parcel with trembling hands.

The mosaic was wonderfully beautiful. On a square slab of black marble, with a few veins of a blue tint, a wreath had been laid down, made of violets, yellowish-white and lilac-coloured roses, and orchids strewn with a dust of gold. A butterfly, with wings the hue of rubies and of emeralds, seemed to be quivering along with the orchid on which it had alighted, while two others hovered just above the flowers. The whole was so marvellously executed, and created so powerful an illusion, that you would have liked to pick up the flowers, or catch a butterfly by the wing.

Nina had seen it before; yet even now she gave a cry of wonder, and viewed it in mute rapture for a long time.

"You are not looking, Casimir?"

"I have seen it. Really it is beautiful. A masterpiece in its way," he replied softly.

"Do you know, we shall have to put it in a wide frame of dull bronze, and hang it on a wall? It wouldn't do to make it into a stand," she said slowly, passing her slender fingers with delicate pressure over the outlines of the leaves and flowers, taking a subtle pleasure in the very touch of those colours.

"I must go out, Nina," her husband said, recollecting on a sudden that he had to see old Mr. Baum.

"Will it be for long? Come back soon, my darling, my only one!" she entreated him, with a close caress, pushing back his moustache to kiss him on the lips.

"In an hour's time. Only to Baum's, just by."

"I shall have tea ready for you."

"All right."

He kissed her and was going out, but stopped on the threshold and said: "Kiss me again, Nina, and wish me luck."

She did so, but with questioning eyes.

"I shall tell you all at tea."

She followed him into the antechamber, looking through the glazed doors till he disappeared in the night and the distance.

She went back to the boudoir and bent in contemplation over her mosaic. The entrance door opened and closed again; he was back.

"I had forgotten to tell you that Grosman, my former university fellow student, whose acquaintance you made in Switzerland last year, had his factory burnt down last night."

"What?"

"Yes, his factory and warehouses are burnt to the ground. Nothing has been saved."

"Poor fellow!" she exclaimed compassionately.

"Don't pity him: the fire has occurred just in time to set him on his legs."

"I don't know what you mean."

"His business was going badly; he was shaky, as they say. So, to mend matters, he arranged for a fire to take place and destroy both factory and storehouses, which he had insured very heavily, and in several companies. The indemnities to be paid will amount to four times his losses. He can now afford to laugh at everybody."

"So he did it on purpose?—Why, that's a crime!" she exclaimed indignantly.

"In the statute-book it is called so, and is punishable accordingly; but it is called 'a good stroke of business' in everyday language." He spoke hurriedly, not looking straight at her; and his face bore a wild and unnatural expression.

"And *he* did that? he who seemed such a singularly noble-minded man? Really, it's incredible. I remember how our conversations were always on the highest matters—righteousness and ethics."

"Ah well, what could he do? Confronted by ruin, he sent righteousness to the right-about, and put ethics off to a more convenient season. One can live without ethics, not without money," he said in a hard voice.

"No, no! Never! Rather die!" she burst out passionately. Her whole nature recoiled at the thought of crime. "Oh how sweet it is that you think otherwise, and that you have never done anything evil!—Had I not loved you till now, I should now have to worship your goodness and honesty!"

Casimir Travinski answered not a word, but kissed those eyes that flashed with indignation, those full, purple lips that so absolutely condemned men without moral principle, and the wickedness and turpitude of their lives; he kissed them impetuously, as if so to hide the deep humiliation that he felt at her words; as if so to quench a certain thought that had been kindled in his mind, and had dazzled him.

He went straight to Baum's factory, which stood opposite his own, just on the other side of the street, at the end of several large gardens. In the counting-house, he found no one but Max, sitting at a desk in his shirt-sleeves.

"Father is in the factory, but I can call him."

"No, I'll go myself. I have never yet been over your factory."

"Nothing to be seen. Beggary everywhere!" he said flippantly, sitting down again to work.

A glazed passage led from the counting-house to the first pavilion of the works. Darkness and silence reigned over the great courtyard, bounded on three sides severally by a three-storeyed factory pavilion. A faint light filtered through the windows; but some of the storeys were quite dark, and with no light but that mournfully shed at the ground-floor entrance door by some smoking naphtha lanterns, that showed the red bricks of the damp greasy walls. The dry clatter of the hand looms with their monotonous recurrence echoed through the passage, littered with cotton rubbish and fragments of worn-out looms, that aroused in the beholder a sense of weariness and melancholy. The stairs, the corridors, were empty; only occasionally did the click-clack of wooden soles resound, or some workman appear, to disappear again dimly and silently in the great rooms to which each separate corridor led. The slumberous stillness was un-

broken, except by the echo of footsteps, or the harsh stridor of the looms at work.

And in the factory chambers, too, all was just as empty, as dusky, as sleepy. These were large and rectangular, supported all down the middle by a double row of iron pillars, and crowded with hand looms of the Jacquard type, that stood in a double line close to the outspread rows of windows. One half of the looms was unused, and covered, as with grey moss, with the cotton down that had settled upon them. A number of lamps, each of them clamped to a pillar, lit the central gangway and the workmen winding yarn for spools with hand spinning-wheels.

The spinning-wheels droned drowsily; drowsily, too, did the workmen bend above them; and drowsily did a score of hand looms in use hum and whir. These, in the wan yellowish lamplight overhead, looked like gigantic cocoons, entangled in myriads of variegated fibres; and among the cocoons the workmen moved about like silk-worms, weaving the stuffs according to pattern. They would bend forward mechanically, holding the sley fast with one hand, while the other drew the threads down and horizontally, the feet pedalling at the same time. The shuttles dashed with a buzz across the warps, like long, yellow beetles a-flying, and came back again with wearisome persistence.

The weavers were all elderly men, who looked with dull, apathetic eyes upon Travinski as he passed, and then went on weaving, drowsily, automatically.

He traversed all those chambers so void of life, with a feeling of pain. He was contemplating the dying throes of the hand-loom industry, still struggling with frantic persistence against the monsters whose enormous bulks, palpitating with energy and clamorous with irresistible power, were visible from the windows when he looked out.

He asked for Mr. Baum; he was answered by a motion of the head or hand; or, if words came, there was no raising of the voice. They all moved like sleeping men, men only half alive, indifferent yet sad—with the sadness of those darkened, taciturn, almost lethal chambers he was

now passing through, stumbling up against pillars, looms standing idle, and working men.

Going through two pavilions—a whole storey of each—he found vacancy, weariness, coming sleep, everywhere. Travinski was besides, on account of the state of his own affairs, given up to ever-increasing depression; he had completely ceased to hope in Baum's intervention, and walked on in the state of one who goes to see a dying man. For the factory, which had at one time employed five hundred hands, now gave work to fivescore only, and had every appearance of an organism sick unto death, and for whom the very trees that murmured outside seemed to be singing a death-chant.

Old Baum was in the third pavilion that looked out upon the street. Baum was sitting in a tiny room, at a writing-desk littered with heaps of samples cut into long shreds. They met in silence, with a powerful grasp of the hand on the part of the old man, who motioned the other to a chair.

"It is long since I saw you," he said at last.

Travinski excused himself, pleading the worries and pressure of business: but he talked on and on, without venturing to come to the point. What kept him back was not only the wretched state of the factory, but the sadness visible in Baum's face, and those mournful eyes perpetually wandering to the casement out of which he could perceive Müller's works, and all the windows ablaze.

Baum replied in few words; then paused, expecting to hear why the young man had called.

Travinski understood, and, cutting short some indifferent remarks, said concisely: "Sir, I have to ask you a favour." Here he stopped and caught his breath.

"My dear sir, I am all attention; go on."

Travinski briefly but exhaustively explained his situation, but hesitated to ask for assistance. The old man had knitted his brows, and he thought he saw a look of unwillingness in his eyes.

"We are all in the same boat," he said deliberately. "They," and he pointed to the great building outside the

window, "they are eating us up.—How can I aid you?" he added.

"Either with a loan, or by guaranteeing my bills."

"For how much?"

"I must absolutely fail unless I have ten thousand roubles," he replied in a low tone and timidly, feeling lest boldness should destroy the friendliness he saw in Baum's eyes.

"I have no cash at hand, but I'll do all I can for you. Give me your bill for that amount, and I will take up your liabilities for the same sum."

Travinski, starting up from the chair, thanked him with great effusion.

"Pray don't mention it, Mr. Travinski: my money is safe. I know you, and know how your business stands.—Here are some forms, please fill them at once."

A wave of bewilderment came over the young man. He was quite thrown off his balance, to find himself saved when he scarcely dared to hope. He very quickly filled up the forms, but ever and anon took a glance at Baum, walking about the room, or stopping at the window to survey Lodz with a severe and sombre gaze.

A whole quarter of the town was before his eyes: houses and factories and warehouses with numberless windows looked out into the night; and with them were the shadows of the workmen and the machines within; electric lights hung in the dusky, murky air, chimneys loomed there by hundreds, throwing out many a streak of white vapour that veiled the lights and the outlines of the buildings.

At times Baum looked out, at times he set to pacing the room again, with thin gaunt face bent forward. He was as tall as his son, but not so stout, and more lively in his movements. He was not much of a talker, and generally settled the most important matters in a few words. A quiet, even reticent man, he was easy-going with his wife and children, occasionally weak; but nevertheless there were points on which he never yielded. His kindness was inexhaustible, and proverbial in Lodz; and yet he was close-fisted at home to the point of eccentricity.

"At what date will you have me meet them?"

"Whenever it may be convenient for you," he said, opening the door to the next room, in which all the looms were working.

He closed the door again, put his hands into the pockets of his old grey threadbare caftan, and looked out upon the town once more.

The telephone sounded; it was the only modern improvement in Baum's factory.

"It's for you," said Baum. "A call from Boroviecki."

Travinski, amazed, put his ear to the receiver.

"My dear fellow, I have learned from your wife where you are now. Well, I have gone over my accounts, and find I can lend you five thousand roubles, but for only two months. Will that do?"

"Will it do? I am delighted," he cried warmly. "Where are you phoning from?"

"From your study. Mrs. Travinska has her eye on me."

"Wait for me, I shall be with you directly."

"All right."

"Boroviecki wants to see me; do you know him?"

"Only by sight. I am not one to mix with the great people of Lodz: the Bucholces, the Mendelsohns, the Salcmans, the Meyers, and the other vermin. I know them all, though; the younger ones by sight only, the others from Michel's, where we meet occasionally. Once we were better acquainted; but that was in the days of old, when there still were honest men in Lodz, and no millionaires as yet. Such times those were! You young folk have no idea of them. I was then with old Geyer, and we were the biggest firm in all Lodz. Then neither steam, nor engines, nor electricity, nor notes of hand, nor shoddy, nor 'playtas,' no, nor factories set secretly on fire, were so much as heard of."

"And yet what is had to come about."

"I know, I know: the old order must give place to the new.—But there, what's the use of talking?" He dismissed the subject with a wave of the hand, and looked over the bills of exchange. He was so much moved with impotent

indignation that for some time he was unable to speak, while he signed the bills.

"Are you in a hurry to be off?"

"I am, and have only now to thank you most heartily for your aid."

"No need whatever. I am only sorry you were not in Lodz fifty years ago, and had a factory here then. You do not fit into Lodz as it is now; at present, honest manufacturers have nothing to do here."

Travinski, who was hastening home, took his leave; they merely settled some points concerning the dates of payment, and parted.

The sirens' shrill notes now rent the air, to announce the end of the day's work; one after another the factory lights were quenched, and darkness took their place.

When the workmen had left, Baum went to his house, which stood in the garden in front of the factory pavilion that had its back to the street. Once in his room, he changed clothes, putting on a light jacket and embroidered slippers, covered his head, on which the hair, though grey, was still abundant, with a skull-cap ornamented with white beads, and entered the dining-room, where the cloth was laid for supper.

Max was sitting at a table, and showing his nieces, who had their arms round his neck, how to build toy houses out of wooden bricks. The girls were giggling continually, and chattering like magpies.

Mrs. Baum sat in a spacious easy-chair, busy knitting. She was about sixty, with a pleasant face that bore the marks of ill health, silver spectacles on a long nose, grey hair combed smooth over a low, bulging forehead, pale-looking eyes, a faded mouth, a blue apron, in a pocket of which was the skein of cotton with which she knitted. There was much sweetness in her voice and her smile. She was always counting stitches, flashing her needles, and smiling: at her son and grand-daughters, at her daughter, who pored over a book, at Frau Augusta, her cousin, who from time immemorial had taken all the housekeeping in hand, at the two sideboards, which stood close together, at the stove, at

the old glazed cabinet, full of china plates and figurines, at Frau Augusta's two tabby-cats, that followed her about everywhere, and rubbed their backs against her dress, purring—in short, she was smiling at everybody and everything, with the fixed, faint, everlasting smile one sees on the faces of the dead.

Peace prevailed throughout the dwelling—the warm glow of an old-fashioned middle-class home. They all had lived so long with one another, they fitted together so well, that even without words a glance sufficed to say what they meant, by mutual understanding.

On leaving the office, the old gentleman left his troubles behind him, and always brought home a serene and radiant face. He had various matters to chat about with his wife, he at times had a dispute with Max; for twenty years he had bantered Frau Augusta. He played with his grandchildren, of whom there were always plenty, for his four daughters had long been married; and he regularly read the *Kölnische Zeitung*, and one of the Polish papers. Every evening, too, he would listen to some sentimental novel out of the *Familienblatt*, which was a delight to both his wife and the daughter present.

So he spent every evening, and this time it was just the same. During all the supper there was a ceaseless flow of talk. He himself had seated the children, and saw to them with great attention, joking meanwhile with Frau Augusta, whose answer was always the same:

"Ya, ya, Herr Baum," and she would smile at him vacantly, showing her long, yellow, uneven teeth.

"Where is Mr. Joseph? Have you kept him for the second serving?"

"Mr. Joseph is coming presently"; and indeed he came in, before she had gathered in her capacious lap the two inseparable tabbies.

Joseph was a sort of practising clerk in the office; left destitute as a boy, he had been for several years the ward of Baum. He was prodigiously tall, very long as to arms and legs, with a large head, hair always in disorder, and a round

face in constant perspiration. Moreover, an extremely shy, gawky fellow, and much in the habit of knocking against doorways and furniture.

He came in not too awkwardly, but, seeing all eyes fixed upon him, began by getting entangled in the floor-cloth, hit hard against a sideboard as he passed, stumbled against Max's chair; and, quite upset by so many mishaps, sat down to supper as red as a beetroot. Though he had finished his classes at the industrial school, and was now eighteen years old, he remained as simple as a child: modest, submissive, and so gentle that his eyes seemed for ever to be asking pardon for venturing to live among people.

He lived in great fear of Max, who as a rule made fun of him. Just then, seeing that everything Joe had to eat slipped out of his hands, Max said, laughing: "I shall have to take you away from Frau Augusta, and take you under my wing."

"Let him be, Max; we shall take better care of him than you would," his sister said.

"A molly-coddle! that's what you'd make of him!"

"And what would you make of him?"

"A man!"

"You'd take him to taverns, to dancing-rooms—and so on. Oh, Fritz has told me of your bachelor's life more than once, and with disgust."

"Ha ha! Fritz disgusted, was he? A capital joke that!—My dear Bertha, you little know your husband!"

Here the father said in a whisper: "Max, do not take away her illusions."

"I don't want to, father; but it makes me wild to see her so taken in by that jackass that she believes all he says like gospel truth."

"Remember, Max, it is of my husband you are speaking."

"We have to remember that too often, Father and I. If he did not belong to our family——"

"If not, what then?" she asked, with her eyes full of tears, and ready to defend her husband.

"If not, we should turn him out of doors!" he answered

in a fury. "You wanted me to tell you. Well, there you are! And make the most of it; cry away. Only remember, it will make you ugly: tears swell the eyes, and make the nose red."

But his sister Bertha had burst out crying, and left the room.

Mrs. Baum gently reproved him for his harsh words.

"Mother, let be; I know what I am saying. Fritz is a miserable beast, who cares only for the tavern, not for the factory. With Bertha he passes himself off for a poor unfortunate man, who succeeds in nothing and overworks himself for his wife and children's sake! Just as if, from the very day of their wedding, Father had not kept them all at his own expense!"

"Hush, Max," the old man said; "why rake up all that?"

"Because an end must be put to this once for all; because this is not common vice and debauchery, but eternal sponging upon you, Father. We are all working hard—in order for my brothers-in-law to have a good time!"

Here he broke off. The bell in the hall had rung. He went to open the door, and ushered in Boroviecki.

His father was somewhat embarrassed and cold in manner; but Mrs. Baum received him very cordially, and at once introduced him to Bertha, who had returned at the sound of the bell, and was curiously observing the only specimen she knew of a real live Don Juan in Lodz, where he had been talked of so many a year.

They pressed him to take tea, but he made excuses. "I have had supper at the Travinskis: on my way home, I just popped in to see Max on business for an instant. I shall have to go at once."

But Frau Augusta would take no refusal; he had to sit down, and she poured out tea for him with her sweetest smile; while Bertha, whose voice was still tremulous with tears, entreated him to take it, and Mrs. Baum, all smiles, set some pastry before him.

He accepted, and, being in a good humour, soon had the whole company at his feet. He talked with Mrs. Baum of her

grandchildren, flattered Bertha by praising her little ones, and spoke enthusiastically of Heyse's last short novel, which lay on the table, as he saw. He took Frau Augusta's heart by storm, playing with her two pets, which came purring on to his shoulders, rubbing their coats on his face; though this irritated him to such a degree that he had a good mind to catch one of the cats by the tail and dash it against the stove. He had a kind word even for Joseph, and was so friendly and genial, and withal had such gentlemanly manners, that in twenty minutes they were all enchanted with him. Even old Mr. Baum, who knew the man well, and had no liking for him, unbent sufficiently to take part in the conversation. Augusta had been so taken with him that she was again and again bringing him cups of tea, and taking new dainties and relishes out of the cupboard; and her smile every now and then laid bare one or another of her teeth.

Max was mute, and gazed on all this with a malicious grin. But tired of the scene at length, and satisfied that Charles too had had enough of it, he rose and took him into the adjoining room.

Silence then fell upon those at the table. The children, sitting with their grandfather, became deeply interested in their playthings. Joseph began to read aloud, according to the established custom. Mrs. Baum knitted. Bertha, while listening, looked from time to time into the room where Charles and Max were sitting, the door having been left ajar. Frau Augusta cleared away the tea-things and stroked her cats; but ever and anon she would stop, raise up her tiny little black eyes, set in her face like grains of pepper in a pan of frying butter, and sigh profoundly.

"A wonderfully pleasant atmosphere is that of your family!" Charles was saying to Max. He had thrown himself back in an arm-chair, and looked round with delight at the family circle in the dining-room.

"Once a year it is. Not oftener. Quite enough of it so."

"And that's much—to have just one day in the year to forget the world, and business, and all the vexations of life, and feel oneself happy with one's family!"

"But you are going to be married, and will soon have enough—perhaps more than enough—of family bliss!"

"Do you know, I am going into the country for a few days?"

"To your fiancée?"

"It's the same thing: Anne lives with my father."

"I should like to make her acquaintance."

"I can take you with me, if only for a few hours."

"A few hours only? Why so?"

"Because you could not stand it any longer; you would die of boredom. Ah, how tedious life is there, how empty, how grey! You have no idea. If it were not for Anne, I could not bear that place—home of my forefathers though it is!"

"And of your father as well."

"Oh, my father! He's one of the now mummified nobility of the bygone democratic days, and is himself a raging democrat—but a nobleman all the same—as all our democrats are. A very curious type!" he broke off with an ironical smile. Yet his eyes were moist with emotion, for he loved his father very dearly.

"When do you start?"

"As soon as ever Moritz is back—no! as soon as Knoll returns. I wired for him to-day. Bucholc is very ill: his old heart-disease again. To-day, and in my presence, he had a fearful attack. They only just managed to pull him through. But that didn't prevent him, as soon as he came to, from abusing me in such language that I felt it my duty to resign my position."

"Can you talk so calmly of all this?" Max exclaimed, seeing Charles rise and scrutinize certain tissues of mixed red and yellow material, on which the candlesticks and lamps were standing.

"You see, sooner or later, I should have had to resign. Only I saw my opportunity then; it was excellent, for my contract ends in October."

"That is, you had the opportunity of answering abuse with abuse, and giving up your situation besides."

Charles laughed, walked about the room, and looked at a series of drawings that hung upon the walls.

"Wisdom in the conduct of life, my boy," he said, "consists in being indignant or amused, angry, or at play or at work, at the right time. Even in withdrawing at the right time from a situation.—Whose portraits are these?"

"Oh, they're our family menagerie!—I quite understand how important all you say is; but as to myself, I never could seize upon such a 'right time.' I could not bring myself to wait for it: I always act on the spur of the moment!"

"Do ye judgment without mercy upon him that hath not been merciful." Charles read aloud this verse from the Bible; it was embroidered in red silk on canvas, set in an oaken frame, and hung up between two windows.

"Oh, what you're reading is a pious text. We had it embroidered and hung up there. Our old German fashion, you know."

"Well, it's a fashion I like. These verses from the Bible give the place an original tone."

"So they do.—Travinski has been here."

"I know, I was with him just now. Your old man has assisted him."

"I guessed as much. He did not speak to me, and his eyes would not meet mine. Do you know the amount?"

"Ten thousand roubles."

"Blood of a dog!—Oh, that German sentimentalism!" And Max swore under his breath.

"The money's quite safe," Charles said to quiet him, while gazing at the velvet-upholstered furniture with its *guipure* covers.

"Oh, I know. That idiot of a Travinski isn't capable of making so much as ten groschen dishonestly. What I take to heart is the way Father does something for everybody in whom he believes; and of course they all try to get at him. Our factory is hardly going at all, our warehouses are crammed so full of ready-made stuffs that we have no room for any more, and no one can tell if the season is to be a

good one; and here the old man is playing at philanthropy and friendly feeling, and trying to rescue others!"

"Quite true. And he *has* rescued Travinski."

"And will be ruined, and will ruin me."

"You have one comfort: your father is the most honest man in Lodz."

"Don't you jeer at me. I'd rather he were the most judicious one."

"Really, you are beginning now to talk just like Welt."

"Like Moritz? And you, are your thoughts better than his?"

"I think otherwise, that's all. Better, worse, honestly, dishonestly, those are mere dialectical differences."

"Ah, and how did you like that ideal Mrs. Travinska?"

"Briefly, I define her, in the style of Sienkiewicz, as a princess out of a fairy-tale."

"Don't you exaggerate? Where could Travinski have met with such a romantic heroine?"

"No, I don't exaggerate. I'll even add that she is full of beauty and refinement.—As to Travinski, do not forget, Max, that he is both strikingly handsome and well-bred. Don't look at him merely as an unsuccessful cotton-mill-owner, but as a man. Now, as a man, he is an exceptional specimen, refined by many generations of culture. He has told me how his father, an extremely wealthy Volhynian landowner, had all but compelled him to open a factory. The old man's head is turned with the idea of great industries, and thinks it the patriotic duty of the nobility to work together with the other classes in order to raise the industrial level here. Such industries, he even thinks, will prove the regeneration of his class.—Well, Travinski is about as good for that sort of thing as you would be yourself for dancing the mazurka; but he obeyed his father, whose capital is now little by little diminishing—melting away in his son's spinning concerns, in which his father's woods and lands are all spinning to nothing. He sees it and feels it himself; no one better. Our Promised Land of Lodz must needs become an accursed land for him; yet in spite of all he is

struggling persistently against failure and ill luck, which he is obstinately resolved to overcome."

"Now and then men of that stamp pull through by sheer stubbornness.—Does she know anything of his position?"

"I think not. He is the sort of man who would perish himself rather than let anyone dear to him suffer any trouble, or get wind of any evil news."

"Why, but that means—that he's in love with his fairy princess!"

"They are both of them more than in love. It's almost worship—mutual adoration; I could read it quite distinctly in their looks."

"And why is she never to be seen anywhere?"

"Don't know. But you cannot imagine how greatly her conversation and her motions charm one, and with what wonderfully supple grace her head is poised."

"Oho! you do speak of her very warmly indeed!"

"I see you grin at the guess you've made; but it's a silly one and quite wrong. I am not, and I could not possibly be, in love with her, though I admire her as a type of beauty whose expression is spiritual in the highest degree. But that is not my type. Yet—yet—— Truly, beside her all our Lodz beauties are like common percale beside the purest silk."

"Why not dye that silk your colour?"

"Let me alone, with your jests that smell of the vat."

"Are you going? Then we leave together."

"H'm. I have business in town."

"Which means that I should be in the way?"

"You have caught my meaning wonderfully.—Kurovski sends his compliments; will be here on Saturday; asks you to supper—nothing out of the way—and inquires in his letter whether the fat German (that's you) has grown any thinner, or the thin Jew (that's Moritz) any fatter."

"He must have his joke. Did Bucholc order any of his chemicals?"

"We have been using them this whole month."

"Then he must be getting on. I have heard that Kessler

and Endelman have also made arrangements with him."

"They have; he wrote me so. He's on the way, and in a fair way, too, to make a fortune."

"Let him, and he'll be a partner along with us."

"Think so, Max?"

"Think so? I know it. Surely there are no difficulties in the way?"

"There are not, and we shall do so. By and by, if you find Horn at our apartment—he was to meet me there, you know—tell him to wait till I come, and that I shall come in two hours at the latest."

After talking over the telegram from Moritz, Charles took leave of Max and the others, and went out with Joseph, who, once outside the house, made him a deep bow, and disappeared suddenly down a darksome lane.

CHAPTER X

JOSEPH, who lodged with the Baum family, was going home to see his parents. The Yaskulskis, for such was Joseph's family name, lived far out, quite beyond the old church, in a lane that bore no name, and ran in front of the well-known streamlet which served as a drain to carry off the refuse of the factories.

The lane itself was like a string of rubbish-heaps, and the dumping-ground of the great town. Along this, Joseph made his way swiftly, and presently came to a house of raw, unplastered brick, the windows of which were lit from basement to garret like one huge lantern, and swarmed with people whose lives were spent there.

In the corridor, quite dark, reeking with foul smells and begrimed with the mud that had been brought in, he groped about till he found the bannisters (clammy to the touch with dirt) and hurried downstairs to the basement. Then he entered a long passage encumbered with rubbish and domestic utensils. This too was befouled with mud, and full of noises and stenches. Light there was none, save that of a small smoky lamp which hung from the ceiling. He steered his way along through all the encumbrances, till he reached the end of the passage.

There he was met by a whiff of warm air, bearing the effluvia of cellar-damp, of decaying matter, and of the moisture that trickled in brown streaks down the whitewashed walls of the dwelling-room.

A troop of children rushed at once to meet and welcome him.

"I thought you were not coming at all to-night!" said a tall, gaunt woman, who stooped very much; she had a sallow, sunken face and large black eyes.

"Dear Mother, I am very late. Mr. Boroviecki came to see us—Mr. Bucholc's manager; and I durst not leave till he left too.—Has Father not come home yet?"

"He has not," she answered in a dull voice, and went to pour out the tea at the fire-place, separated from the rest of the room by a curtain of coarse stuff, suspended on a wire.

Joseph followed her, taking with him some provisions he had brought.

"And to-day I got my week's salary from old Mr. Baum, Mother; please put it by." He laid down four roubles and a few kopeks; his pay was five roubles weekly.

"Don't you keep anything for yourself?"

"I want nothing, Mother. I am only sorry I can't yet earn so much as you need," he replied with great simplicity, but without the timidity that always hampered him so much with strangers.

He cut the bread into slices, and was about to return to the other side of the curtain.

"Joe! my dearest boy, my darling child!" his mother whispered in a voice that shook with tears; and tears indeed came streaming down her worn cheeks, and sprinkling her son's head as she embraced him.

He kissed her hand dutifully, and returned with a beaming face to the rest of the family, seated on the floor near a tiny grated window that opened upon the side-walk close to the pavement. There were four of them; the youngest two, the eldest ten years old. They played together, but very quietly for an elder brother, thirteen years old, lay sick in bed. It was consumption, and his bed had been pushed away from the wall a little, because of the moisture that was trickling down and might wet the bed-clothes.

"Tony!" Joseph said, bending over the pillow and the bright-hued coverlet, to a pallid sea-green face, out of which glassy eyes were staring with the tragic immobility of one close to death.

The sick boy did not answer, but only moved his lips, and fixed his shining grey eyes on his brother, then touched his cheeks in a childlike caress with his thin fingers. A wan smile, like the smile of flowers that are fading, passed over those pale lips, and gave life to the glance of the dying boy.

Joe sat down by his side, set his pillows straight, and combed the lad's fair hair, that was matted and dishevelled, but as soft as silk. Then he spoke again: "Tony, are you better to-day?"

"Better," the boy answered, very low, smiling at the same time and nodding, as to confirm what he said.

"Ah! you will quite soon be all right!" He snapped his fingers with satisfaction. Healthy and powerfully built as he was himself, he had not the least idea of the hopelessness of his brother's condition.

Yes, Tony was dying slowly of consumption. The disease had followed upon a sharp attack of influenza. It had been aided in its course by the misery which had for two years preyed upon the whole family, ever since they had left the country to come and live in Lodz; aggravated besides by the look of wretchedness in his mother's face, sadder and sadder every day; by the bearing of his younger brothers and sisters, ever more and more hushed and subdued; by the eternal clattering of the looms, to be heard almost ceaselessly overhead, day and night; by the deadly moisture that streamed down the walls of their lodgings; by the noisy quarrelling and even fighting too often to be heard in the neighbouring rooms, both in the basement and overhead; and most of all by the consciousness, daily more and more intense, of the misery in which they were plunged.

The lad had been greatly matured by the evil fortune that had overwhelmed them, and the lingering malady had done much to develop the quiet dreamy side of his nature, quiet and dreamy as it always had been.

"Joe, are the fields not green yet?" he asked.

"No; we are only half through March to-day."

"A pity!" And a shadow of pain came into his eyes.

"All will be green in a month, and you will be all right again; and we shall club together and go a-maying."

"Ah, you'll go, and Mamma, and Papa, and Sophy and Adam and all of you; but I shall not go, not I!" And he shook his head, while the colour came to his pale cheeks in two pink patches.

"Joe, we shall go too!" the other children cried, coming to the lad's bed-side.

"Yes, you will, but in a carriage," he answered with gravity.

"In a carriage with four chestnut horses!" one of the little girls put in, pressing her tiny head of flaxen hair against Joe's knees, while she looked round at her brothers and sisters out of bright eyes overflowing with gladness.

"Gee-up!" a chubby little boy called out, pushing a chair before him, and belabouring it with a whip made of his mother's apron-strings.

"Yes, you'll go, Hela; so will Ignatz and Bolo and Kazio."

Mrs. Yaskulska looked on in silence, wiping her eyes furtively.

Even Tony felt elated and hummed a tune, while Joseph's eyes were fixed on his mother. She presently leaned over the table, and for a while quite gave herself up to the memories of a past that was not very long past and still lived intensely in the hearts of them all. Especially was Tony absorbed in them; his whole soul was carried away in the past. He sang no longer, nor was the present anything to him; he had gone back in mind—back to that beloved country place which he was dying to see once more; just as a flower will die when planted in the wrong soil.

Presently the mother's voice called them all: "Children, come to tea!"

Tony woke immediately, feeling quite bewildered. Where was he? He looked round in amazement at the room, and the walls green with damp, on which their forefathers' portraits were rotting, together with the rest of the family; these had been saved from the wreck, and remained amid the present dire realities. His eyes shone with tears, as he lay

speechlessly and dreamily contemplating the dingy brown drops of moisture glistening on the walls.

Joe carried the table into the middle of the room, and they were all seated round it presently. The children fell greedily upon the bread and tea. Joseph alone ate nothing, looking with a father's wistful gaze upon those flaxen heads, those eyes so eagerly watching the bread as it disappeared, and on their mother, who, with her face of a martyr and her stooping, broken-down frame, paced the room like an affectionate shadow, and embraced them all in one look of boundless love. Her high-caste face, stamped as it was with the mark of intense sorrow on its extremely delicate and comely features, turned most frequently towards the sick boy.

No one spoke during tea.

The weaving looms were incessantly at work, whirring overhead; the huge spinning-wheels hummed and droned, causing an endless vibration all through the house. Now and then there would come through the window a confused noise from the street, filling the room with din; or there would be heard footsteps splashing through the mud, or the clattering of passing carts and the jingle of harnesses.

The lamp, which had a green shade over it, shed a softened light over the room, and only shone bright upon the children's heads.

Suddenly and violently the door was thrown open, and a girl came in, noisily stamping her feet clear of mud upon the threshold.

She kissed Mrs. Yaskulska lovingly, embraced the children, who came rushing to her with cries of joy, shook hands with Joe, and bent over the sick lad.

"Good-evening, Tony; here are some violets for you!" she exclaimed, and taking a bunch of them from her opulent bosom, tossed it on to his breast.

"Thanks. How good of you to have come, Sophy. Have you come straight from home?"

"No, I was at Mrs. Shulc's, where Felek played on the concertina. I listened for some time; then I ran over to Mary, from whom I have come to see you on my way."

"Is your mother well?"

"Thank you, she is. So much so that she has been quarrelling with us till Father went off to the beer-house, and I ran away for the whole evening.—Do you know, Joe, that Baum junior of yours is a very handsome young spark?"

"Have you made his acquaintance?"

"I was shown him to-day by a working-girl—a wool-carder."

"He's a very good, kind man," Joseph answered most earnestly, and gazed at Sophy, who could not remain seated a moment, but either must assist Mrs. Yaskulska with the tea, or look over the books which stood on an old chest of drawers, or turn up the lamp, or examine the covering of the sewing-machine, or stroke the children's hair: in short, she spun round the room like a peg-top. That mournful, dreary dwelling was filled by her with the abounding life and health which emanated from her resolute and very pretty face and keen black eyes.

There was something not a little masculine in her, in her emotions and her decided manners; it came from her work in the factory, where she was in continual contact with men.

"Mrs. Yaskulska, you ought not to wear that kerchief on your head; it makes you look plain."

"What a funny remark, Sophy!"

"But oh dear!" and she slapped her thigh, caught at her shapely nose, with its daintily chiselled little nostrils—and then set to arranging her hair in front of a small mirror that hung upon the wall.

"My dear Sophy, you are positively growing prettier every day!"

"Bah! Young Kessler told me the same yesterday—Kessler, who is at the head of our spinning department." And she laughed merrily.

"Are you pleased at it?"

"It's all one to me. All those young sparks tell me the same, but I—I make fun of them!" Her bright red lips pouted indeed, but the satisfaction caused by the young men's homage was to be seen shining in her face.

She went on chattering, babbling, telling all sorts of particulars about the factory girls at her place, and the foremen, and the directors. Then she assisted Mrs. Yaskulska in undressing the little ones and putting them to bed. These proceedings they were greatly averse to, for they all were enchanted with her; she was so nice to them and entertained them so well.

"Do you know, madam," she went on to say, "I have sold those two crochet-work coverlets and a couple of jackets. You'll get the money on Saturday, when the salaries are paid."

"God bless you, Sophy!"

"Don't mention it. Please make some other jackets like them, only more richly ornamented—and I'll get all our girls to buy them."

"Who was it bought the coverlets?"

"Oh! young Kessler. He saw me showing them in the office this afternoon, took them home, and told me his mother had purchased them. Didn't even try to haggle! A fine fellow.—Tony! do you recollect how we all danced last year on Mary's name-day?"

"Of course I do!" he replied with alacrity.

"Well, this year the factory is to arrange an excursion for us all; we are to go to Ruda. I must go there with Father—I must, no matter what Mother says or does.—Joe, did you amuse yourselves last Sunday?"

"We did, but Adam was not with us. Staying at home?"

"At home? He? Why, he has not spent his Sundays at home for a month. I suppose he is always with those people of Spacerova Street. The wrong sort, I have no doubt!"

"Don't say such a thing, Sophy!" Joe pleaded. "I know both Mrs. Lapinska and Mrs. Stecka quite well. They are true ladies, who have lost their property as we have ours, and are now working hard like us all."

"Well, I can't say. Mamma told me; but now and then she tells fibs till all is blue. And then she has a grudge against them, because Adam is always at their lodgings."

"Adam" was Malinovski, the young man with ashen-

blond hair and green eyes who frequented the Colony; he was Sophy's brother.

"Does your father work at night, Sophy?"

"Oh yes, he's on the move from 10 P. M. to 6 A. M."

The silence which followed was broken by Joe, saying: "Mother, I met Stanley Vilchek in Piotrovska Street at noon to-day. You know: the boy who coached me in the sixth form. The son of the village organist at Kurov. Surely you remember him, Mother. We had him once staying with us for all the midsummer holidays."

"What is he doing here in Lodz?"

"All sorts of things, he told me. He is employed in the railway parcels-delivery office, but he does lots of other things besides. Keeps horses and carts coals from the station to the factories. Has a timber depot in Mikolajevska Street, and expects to be opening a shop in Warsaw, and selling remnants from the factories. He wanted me to take a position there in his storehouse."

"What did you say to that?"

"I refused decidedly. He may perhaps pay a higher salary, but who knows for how long he will pay it?"

"Is he good-looking?" Sophy inquired.

"Very much so indeed, and so elegantly dressed that he might be a factory-owner at least. He sends you his compliments, Mother, and said he would come and see us."

"My dear Joe, it's better he should not. Why must he see how—and where—we are living? No, no; his visit would be very painful to me. The Lord God grant him every success! but why should he find out how we have come down?"

"But you see, madam, such a man may now and then be of use——"

"My dear Sophy, we shall never ask such a man to be of use," she interrupted rather impatiently. Her pride was revolted at the thought of receiving assistance from a man whom, as a lad, she herself had assisted to enter a high school—the son of the village organ-player, who, when he came to their manor, came no farther in than the hall,

to receive donations in kind of various sorts. The mere possibility of such a thing was an outrage to her family dignity.

"Father is coming in, and the doctor along with him," said Tony, who had heard them in the passage.

Yaskulski then entered, preceded by Vysocki—of whom they said he had more patients than any other doctor in Lodz, but had to live at his mother's expense, for all were paupers whom he treated.

He greeted everybody, let his eyes rest an instant longer on Sophy, who had placed herself so as to be well in view, and then proceeded to auscultate Tony.

Sophy assisted him with such superfluous zeal in lifting Tony up in bed, and was so constantly hovering and fluttering about them, that the doctor lost patience and said: "Please leave us by ourselves."

Highly offended, she withdrew behind the curtain, where she found Yaskulski, sitting on the coal-box and in a whining voice pleading his own cause before his wife.

"No, as I love honour, I am not intoxicated.—I met Stavski—you remember him?—He has come to Lodz, destitute: the Germans have turned him out of his estate, as they have done to us. We went to the Polish Hotel, wept over our miseries, drank a nip of vodka each—and that was all—all our orgy! Afterwards I was middleman for a Jew horse-dealer, and we took a stirrup-cup together—and that was all we drank!—Then I was at Shwarc's; the place was taken already, but there's a situation that will possibly be vacant in the railway storehouses. I shall go to the manager tomorrow, and hope to succeed in getting the place."

"Yes. Just as you have always succeeded," she said bitterly, but in a low voice, while she was anxiously watching Tony and the doctor.

Yaskulski said no more, and stared vacantly at the lamp. His puffy face, his blond, wavy moustache, and all about him bore witness to dire helplessness and almost tragical incompetency. He was an incapable in the fullest and deepest sense of the word. It was through inefficiency that he had lost

all his own, all his wife's property; through inefficiency that he had for two years failed to obtain a situation; for if he ever got one through his friends' exertions, he was sure to lose it for lack of energy.

Yaskulska, his wife, had taken to sewing jackets, pinafores, and women's caps. Every Sunday she went to offer them for sale in the Old Town. She had attempted to take in the washing of the working-people in the house; her strength had failed her. She had tried boarding them, but it would not turn to account. And so, though she knew she was not proficient, she had set about giving lessons to the daughters of foremen and railway officials: lessons in Polish, in French, in piano-playing. By all these various ways and means of earning money, and all her hard work for eighteen hours a day, she got ten roubles a month!

But she got them, and the family did not die of starvation; and in so far she was a success. Her position had become somewhat less intolerable, since Joe got his salary—twenty roubles a month—and put the entire sum into her hands.

"Well, Doctor?" she asked, advancing towards him as soon as he had ended his auscultation.

"No change. Same treatment as before. A little cognac may be given him in his milk."

He took a bottle and a box of powders out of his overcoat.

"And what do you think of the case?" she asked, but so low that he guessed rather than heard what she said.

"I can say nothing for sure. We shall have to send him into the country as soon as it gets warm. I have thought of the "summer colonies"; but they are not for him. All the same, I could obtain places there for the two elder children, and so send them with the others; a few weeks in the country would do them lots of good."

She faltered a word or two of thanks.

"Cheer up, now," he said, turning to the boy; "we shall see in summer how the grass grows. All right?"

"All right, sir."

"Ah! do you like reading?"

"Oh, that I do! But I have read all our books through. Even the old almanacs."

"To-morrow I'll send you some new books; but you'll have to tell me about all you've read."

Tony could not speak for joy, but squeezed the doctor's hand very hard.

"Then good-bye. See you again in a few days."

He laid his hand caressingly on the boy's clammy forehead, wet with perspiration, and took his overcoat.

"Doctor," Tony said timidly, "these violets smell so sweet! Dear good doctor, please take them. You are as kind to me as Mother or as Joe; please take them! Sophy gave them to me: take them, please!" So he begged him, and with such depth of entreaty that Vysocki was greatly moved: he accepted the violets with a smile, and put them into a buttonhole of his overcoat.

As he was going out, Mrs. Yaskulska tried to press a rouble into his hand. He started back as if stung.

"No foolishness, if you please, madam!" he said in an angry tone.

"But really, Doctor, I cannot let you take so much trouble, give so much time—I cannot."

"Your boy has paid me already. Good-night, madam!"

And he disappeared down the passage, with old Yaskulski at his heels, who was to show him the way back to Piotrovska through the slums.

"Oh, that stupid pride of the nobility!" he grumbled, walking so fast meanwhile that it was hard work for Yaskulski to overtake him.

"Have you nothing for me, Doctor?" he inquired hesitatingly, as he at last came up with him.

"Situations there are; only it is necessary to work in them."

"What! am I unwilling then?"

"You both can work and are willing to work; but in Lodz that is not sufficient; you must know how.—Why did you not remain at Weisblatt's? It was not a bad situation."

"Upon my word of honour, I was not in fault. The manager persecuted me till I could bear it no longer, and I was continually insulted."

"If a man insults you, knock him down, but take care to give no occasion for gibes and insults.—I have had to blush for you!"

"But why? Surely mine was honest work."

"I know; but so miserable that I was ashamed."

"I worked as well as I could and as I knew," Yaskulski said in a voice tremulous with tears.

"No whining now, no blubbering! What the devil! you are not trying to palm off a blind horse on me. I can believe your word without more ado."

"On my word of honour, sir, you are outrageous!"

"Then go back home and God speed you! I shall find my way to Piotrovska Street by myself."

"Adieu," Yaskulski answered curtly, and turned on his heel.

Vysocki had been greatly exasperated, and it had been too much for him, but his brutality towards a man so helpless now struck him with shame.

"Mr. Yaskulski!" he called after him.

"What is it, Dr. Vysocki?"

"Possibly you need money; I can lend you a few roubles."

"No—on my word of honour—but—but I thank you."

He was clearly weakening, giving way; he had already forgotten the insult.

"Here you are; you will return them when you come into that legacy from your aunt." He put three roubles into his hand and walked away.

Yaskulski eyed the money by the light of a street lamp, sighed, dropped a tear, and crawled home.

Vysocki found his way to Piotrovska Street, and walked along slowly, disgusted with all the misery he met with daily. He looked round with sad, tired eyes at the town before him, now no longer noisy; at the factories that loomed out of their courtyards like black slumbering monsters in their dens; at the numberless casements, gleaming still—eyes,

as it were, that peered into the moist darkness of the night. He felt oddly uneasy and out of sorts; there was growing in his mind an unaccountable sense of fear, and of such lawless waves of disquietude as—without any external cause—will at times swoop down, lay siege to the heart, and weaken and terrify a man to such an extent that he dreads lest the houses he sees may fall and crush him, and he stops short, awaiting some horrible news, and feeding his thoughts with every sort of calamity that a human being may have to meet with.

Such was the mood in which Vysocki now strode on. He had no wish to go home, nor even, though passing close by, to enter a coffee-house and read the papers. All things were of no account to him just then, in his state of mind, with that nightmare of unrest entering his soul and making him its prey.

"A foolish life that I am leading now," he thought. "Absolutely foolish!"

And just by the theatre he met with Mela, face to face. It was after the performance; she was walking with Rose, and their coach followed them. He bowed rather carelessly, and was about to pass them.

"Won't you see us home?"

"I did not wish to intrude."

"Come in to tea; Bernard is sure to be waiting for us."

He walked on in silence, having no mind to speak.

"What's wrong with you, Vysocki?"

"Nothing but my usual nervous irritability, and a painful sense of lethargy besides."

"But has anything unpleasant happened to you?"

"No. But I am expecting some bad news, and when I have such forebodings, they always are realized."

"I," Mela said, "am just like you; but I was ashamed to say so."

"I have been among the very poor to-day, and have drunk so deeply of so many aspects of human wretchedness—that I have taken more of it than was good for me." A nervous shudder shook him all over at the remembrance.

"Compassion," Rose observed, "is the illness you suffer from; Bernard always says so."

"Bernard!" Vysocki raised his voice. "His complaint is a delirium that leads him to belittle all things; and he is so blind that he wants to persuade people that there is nothing to see, because he sees nothing!"

"And who are those 'very poor'?" Mela asked. "Can one assist them?"

He told her of the position of the Yaskulskis, and of several other families.

She listened with sympathy, and took mental note of their addresses. "Oh, why are men doomed to make each other suffer so?" she cried.

"And now, Mela, let me ask what the matter is with you. You seem ready to break down."

"Do not ask! Do not so much as wish to know!" She bowed her head and looked down.

He asked no more questions, but glanced at her face and fell into a brown study.

Before them stretched the silent, deserted street, with its dotted rows of lamps, and its long lines of houses, like petrified giants' heads, one following the other, the window-panes seeming to move in the yellowish light of the street lamps—a scene in some ghastly horrible dream.

"What can have come over her?" he wondered, casting wistful glances towards her, and becoming conscious that her sadness was beginning to make him sad as well.

"I suppose you have not enjoyed yourselves much at the play."

"Quite the contrary.—But oh, the tremendous power of love!" Rose answered, and went on to explain the reason of her exclamation. "How much poor Sapho had to endure! I have still present all those cries of hers, all those entreaties, all her torments: they are before my mind. Such love as hers frightens me, dismays me—I cannot understand her, and I doubt even whether it is possible to feel so much —to give oneself over to love so completely, to be so swallowed up by it—drowned in it!"

"Yet it is—it is possible," Mela returned, raising her eyes.

"Come round to my side, Vysocki, and give me your hand," said Rose.

He did, and she took that thin, nervous hand, pressing it to her forehead and to her burning cheeks.

"Do you not feel that I am in a fever?"

"Yes, and the fever is high. But why do you go, then, to so nerve-shattering a drama?"

"And what else on earth would you have me do?" she cried, in a voice of pain, opening her eyes wide as she looked him in the face. "Can you advise me how to get away from the weariness I feel? No. By now I am tired of all our at-homes, fed up with drives about town, weary of travelling abroad and living that hotel life that I cannot bear. Well, the stage still interests me from time to time. Yes, it strikes upon the nerves, plays upon the heart-stings—and I love to be so roused and moved to the very deepest depths of me!"

Here he broke in, not having listened to her. "What ails Mela?" he queried.

"You shall be told this instant."

"No, no, no!" cried Mela, who had heard both question and reply.

They had now come to the brilliantly lighted vestibule of Mendelsohn's palace.

"Is Mr. Endelman in?" she inquired of the footman in waiting, to whom she handed her hat and cloak.

"He is in the trophy room, and begs you to join him there."

"Let us go there; it is warmer than in my boudoir; warmer, too, than in any of the other rooms," Rose said, as they traversed a suite of apartments, dim in the feeble flickering of a six-branched chandelier, which the footman held up as he led the way.

The "trophy room" belonged to Stanislas Mendelsohn, Shaya's youngest son. Its name came from its carpet of tigers' skins, and door-hangings of the same; the furniture was of buffalo-horns and covered with their hides dressed with

the long ashen-coloured hair on. Numerous weapons, hanging on the wall, formed a ring round a huge elk-head, with flat, wide-spreading antlers.

"I have been waiting for a whole hour," said Bernard, who did not so much as rise at their entrance, but remained sitting under the elk's head, taking his tea.

"Why did you not come to the theatre and fetch us home?"

"Because I never go to see puppet-shows, and you know it. —They are all right for you, though."

"You are posing," Rose retorted flippantly.

The footman brought in the tea.

There was a heavy, tedious silence in the room. The only sounds heard were the frequent striking of a match—for Bernard was continually lighting fresh cigarettes—or the dull impact of billiard-balls in the next room.

"Who is playing?"

"Stanislas and Kessler."

"Have you seen them?"

"They bored me very soon, and beat me at play still sooner. But now, at last, we may possibly have a little conversation."

No one, however, cared to set the example. Mela, plunged in unpleasant thought, looked at Rose sorrowfully, and at times wiped her eyes.

"Truly, Mela, you are quite plain to-night. A weeping woman is like a wet umbrella, always dripping, whether open or shut. I can't bear women's tears; they are either untrue or silly. Dust in the eyes or a waterspout on the slightest provocation!"

"Let us alone, Bernard; just now even your comparisons come in at one ear and pass out at the other."

"Oh, let him talk; it's his strong point."

"Well, you too, Rose, are looking rather seedy. You seem as if someone in the vestibule had been kissing and hugging you very hard, and the delightful business had been interrupted at the most interesting moment."

"You are not in perfect form to-night by any means."

"That's no concern of mine."

"Then why do you talk such nonsense?"

"Because you all are sending me off to sleep. You, Vysocki, look like a tallow candle set on the table of a sabbath, with a snuff so long as to blacken the charms of the Shulamite herself!"

"I do not feel so satisfied with the world as you do."

"How right you are! I do feel extremely satisfied," Bernard said, laughing nervously, and lighting another cigarette.

"Another of your poses!" Rose exclaimed, losing patience.

"Rose!" Bernard exclaimed with a sudden outburst, as if she had lashed him across the face. "Either pocket all I say, or never see me here again!"

"Why do you fly out so? I did not mean to offend you."

"It's the silly nonsensical names you give me that make me fly out. You define me as one who poses; yet you do not know me in the least. And what can you know of me—of my life? What can girls know of a man? girls who have not yet left the sphere of childish frippery, of childish boredom? Nothing, nothing absolutely but this: how he is dressed, how his hair and his eyes look, whom he is in love with—and whether he dances well; these things and things like these. Of me you know only the outward man, and you think to define me for what I am!—You say of me: 'It's his nature to pose.' And why? Because now and then I let off a paradox about the futility of life—of work—of money. Now, if Vysocki had let it off, you would have listened to him, for he has no money, and must work hard; but because I despise all that, I am a man who poses! How indeed could a girl understand that I mean what I say, if I am a rich man and hold shares in the factory of Kessler and Endelman? And just as reasonably you call Müller a merry-andrew. You never see him but when he turns somersaults here, or tells funny anecdotes or tales of love adventures. Yet, funny though he is, still, behind Müller the funny man there hides another Müller—who thinks, who observes, who draws inferences. Oh, of course neither he nor I would come to you

with our inferences, our internal ego; we would never tell you of what oppresses or wounds or enraptures us; that's not what you want. You are weary and want us to amuse you. Very well, then, we become merry-andrews for your mockery to seize upon; but only because we choose for a time to play the fool and cut somersaults and entertain the young geese of Lodz, who otherwise would feel bored. You look on us as upon a piece of goods for sale, valuing it as you value us, to the extent to which it may suit your fancy!—But after all, whoever speaks sensibly to a woman pours water into a sieve."

"Silly we may be perhaps, but you are surely conceited," said Rose; and Mela added:

"If we do not see what you blame us for not seeing, it is your own fault—the fault of you all—you treat us like children."

"Because children you are, and children you will remain eternally!" With which caustic words, Bernard rose.

"If so," Rose argued, "why do you blame us for not acting as grown-ups?"

"I may have hurt your feelings. If I have, I can but leave you. So good-night!" And he walked towards the door.

"Stay, Bernard, stay! I beg you!" Rose cried, starting up and standing in his way.

He went out, but only to another room, where he sat down to play the piano.

Rose, extremely indignant at what she had heard, walked about the room. Vysocki remained mute. He judged Bernard's speech to be mere sounding words, of which he had not so much as endeavoured to catch the meaning. He only kept his eyes fixed on Mela, who, bending forward over the table, gazed into empty space.

"Sit down by my side," she said to him, feeling that his eyes were so earnestly fixed on her.

He came and bent over her, asking: "What is it then that pains you so?" His soft, gentle voice caused within her a strangely sweet feeling of delight, that made her cheeks flush red as fire.

Nevertheless she said no word; her voice had failed her. Besides, after that one instant of rapture, such a wave of misery came over her that her grey eyes brimmed with tears. His hand lay on the table; she bent down till her cheek touched it. Then those tears which she had long kept back came pouring down upon it in a shower, running over it in a warm stream.

Her tears touched him to the quick. With an instinctive movement he caressed her soft hair, and whispered incoherent affectionate words in a voice that trembled with tender sympathy.

She moved her head closer and closer to him; every touch of his hand electrified and penetrated her with indescribable sweetness. A wild longing seized her—to lay her head on his breast, to throw her arms round his neck, and, thus holding him embraced, to tell him of the misery that had come to overwhelm her. Her soul, sensitive in the extreme, was hungering for caresses, as it was hungering for love which she was afraid at that moment to reveal to him by reason of the feminine instinct of modest passivity that held her back. But her weeping was so restrained and subdued that nothing betrayed the state of her feelings, except her flowing tears and the trembling which she was unable to control.

She beheld him through the mist of her tears—those tears which made his soul yearn towards her so mightily, and aroused in him such powerful emotions that he feared he should yield to the temptation of kissing her tremulous, burning lips. For what he felt was not love, even at that moment; it was but the outcome of his intense compassion for all suffering. Nay, in all he saw, he saw no sign of her love for him: friendship only he saw, because he desired hers.

Bernard went on playing with increasing force and fury. He smote on the piano, and the wild strains of a turbulent scherzo came forth, filling the empty rooms as with throbbing peals of fierce sardonic laughter, that seemed rolling along the carpet in rhythmical waves.

Rose was meantime pacing the whole suite of rooms from end to end and back, paying heed to nothing: now emerging

from the shadows, now flitting through the "trophy room," then disappearing beyond, to reappear presently; always with that ponderous swinging motion of the hips, that was nearly a halt.

She pretended to be plunged in thought; in reality she wanted to give Mela and Vysocki an opportunity to arrive at an understanding, and was vexed to see that they both sat motionless and speechless. She wished to see them rush into each other's arms with a cry of love upon their lips—to behold them devour each other with kisses. She had in imagination prepared the whole scene beforehand; and now, greedily desirous to witness it, every now and then she faced about, in order to catch them in the very act of a fond embrace.

"He's a hopeless case!" she thought in resentful disappointment, and, stopping in the dark doorway, carefully noted his features and bearing.

"As loving as an oyster!" she hissed scornfully. Then she turned to Bernard, who had done playing.

"One o'clock!—Good-night, Rose: I must be going home."

"We may go together, if you like; I shall take you, my carriage is in waiting," Mela said, turning to Vysocki, who was buttoning and unbuttoning his coat, like a man half asleep.

"Very well."

"Mela!" said Rose on taking leave of her, "don't forget that Mrs. Endelman's birthday is on Saturday."

"To-day my sister-in-law begged me to remind you that you are anxiously expected."

"I got the invitation yesterday, but doubt if I shall go."

"You really must. You will see lots of odd people, and we two will make fun of my sister-in-law. They are arranging a surprise for the visitors—a concert, a new picture —and the mysterious Travinska is to be there."

"Then I shall go with you. She is something worth seeing."

Vysocki saw Mela to her carriage.

"Why, are you not getting in?" she asked in wonderment, seeing him shake hands with her.

"I am afraid not, Miss Mela; I must walk a little. My nerves are terribly unstrung," he pleaded, not quite frankly.

"In that case, Doctor Vysocki, I wish you good-night," she replied stiffly, hurt by his refusal.

He did not notice her attitude, but kissed her hand. She at once regretted her change of demeanour, and turned a friendly face to him from her carriage.

"Let's go to some tavern," Bernard said to him.

"Thanks, no; I am in no mood for that to-night."

"Then to the Château."

"No, I am going straight home; my mother is expecting me."

"I don't like to hear you talk so. Since some time you have been very singular, and look like a man infected by the bacillus of love!"

"On my word of honour, I am not in love."

"You are, but don't know you are as yet."

"And with whom, pray?"

"With Mela."

Vysocki laughed, but his laughter did not ring quite true. "You have made a big mistake."

"I never make mistakes in such cases."

"Well, and if I were in love, why do you speak to me about it?" he asked in no very good humour.

"I think it is a pity for you to be in love with a Jewess."

"Again, why?"

"Jewesses are all right to flirt with, Polish girls to make love to, and German women to start a breeding-establishment. But for you to take a Jewess to wife—never. Better drown yourself."

Vysocki stopped short. "Since we are in for plain speaking, let us speak plainly.—Am I in your way at all?"

"Not in the least, I assure you. The idea!" he answered, with a rasping laugh. "I have warned you in a friendly way. Between you there are such great race-differences that not even the most intense love can sweep them away. Do no violence to your race; do not marry any Jewess.—And so, farewell!"

He got into a cab and drove home, while Vysocki once again set to walking up Piotrovska Street, as he had done two hours since; but now he walked on quickly and in a far different mood. What Bernard had said gave him much matter for thought, and he tried to analyse the feeling which Mela had aroused in him.

CHAPTER XI

MELA meanwhile, locked up in her room, was in deep meditation concerning herself. She lay in bed, her eyes open, and listened to the silent night, and to the voices that were now beginning to be heard within her: voices of protest against her father's intention; in the course of the day he had, not without insistence, laid a proposal of marriage before her. This was, plainly put, a mere commercial arrangement with the great firm Wolfish & Landau, of Sosnoviec, who had a son and heir that they wished to marry to the daughter of the firm Grünspan & Lansberger.

On both sides the affair promised to be a good stroke of business.

Young Leopold Landau was willing. He did not care a fig whom he married, not he! provided the girl had a marriage portion in ready money—and enough of it. He meant to start a business on his own, and required cash; and since Mela had the dowry he wanted, and besides, as he liked her photograph very much (the matchmakers had procured it for him in secret), he had no objection to marrying her at once. Whether she loved him or not, was a clever girl or a fool, healthy or sickly, sweet-tempered or shrewish—that was all the same to him, as he remarked to the go-betweens.

And he had come to Lodz that very day, to have a look at his intended. He liked Papa exceedingly. Mela dazzled him; the factory gave him the impression of a splendidly going concern. Not that he said anything to that effect to old Grünspan. Quite the contrary. He beheld it uninterestedly, and even made a wry face at some kerchiefs ready for sale.

"Lodz make!" he said with a wink.

"Don't be an ass; they sell splendidly!" Grünspan flared up.

Leopold was far from taking amiss the old man's extreme simplicity of language—in business one never takes such things amiss—he only slapped him on the back, and they both went in to dinner in perfect harmony.

During the whole meal Mela was in tortures. She listened to Landau's compliments (of Sosnoviec make) in sheer disgust, and as soon as ever she could, had gone out to take refuge with her friend Rose.

"I have gained half a day so, but what will become of me to-morrow—and after?" So she thought, as she lay in the dark, watching the blinds, through which the moon shed a greenish light, with motes dancing in its bright beams, above the gay-coloured carpet and the dark-hued majolica stove. "But they shall not force my will—no, that they shall not!" she added, recalling with strong abhorrence young Leopold and his squirrel-like face, while the remembrance of that husky, raucous voice and that slobbering, thick-lipped mouth, like a Negro's, simply filled her with physical loathing.

She shut her eyes and buried her face in her pillow, to get rid of the impression of nausea she had. She felt a nervous shrinking at the recollection of the cold moisture on his hands, and could not help wiping her own on the sheet, and looking them over a long time by the light of the moon, as though she feared his touch had left some filthy mark behind it.

She knew she loved Vysocki with all her heart and soul, and with him all the people with whom she had been brought up in Warsaw—people not in the least like those around her. She knew that she would never marry Leopold, that she would resist any pressure her father and family might bring to bear. Into that resolve she put all her energy—and then she thought no more of anyone but Vysocki, not even troubling whether he cared for her; she loved him herself too dearly to notice, or even to think that he might not be in love.

That day, at the Mendelsohns', she had not told him her

trouble. He himself was so unstrung, so grieved! Besides, she felt a fear in his presence, like that of a child, too bashful to complain in presence of its elders. She had been pained by that refusal of his to drive home with her; but he had gripped her hand so fast—and he had kissed it! The memory thrilled her even now.

She lay motionless for several hours, calling to mind both the evening just gone by, and the whole period of their acquaintance. She drew herself up and pressed her head hard down upon the pillow, remembering the touch of his hand as he stroked her hair; and she throbbed at the memory with a sweet, enervating enjoyment.

Then, as the grey dawn came, bringing more light to the room, and outlining more clearly all the upholstery and furniture, she set to thinking of doctors whom she knew well, and of their worldly success. There were two fellow students of hers who were married to doctors, and who received company in a style not more limited than did many a manufacturer. This eased her mind completely; and, filled with the thought that she too might, like them, keep house and have all the intelligentsia of Lodz to her at-homes, she fell asleep.

It was rather late in the morning when she awoke, with a severe headache. When she entered the dining-room, the whole family were there, seated at lunch. She fed her old grandmother first of all, and then sat down to table, paying no heed to Sigismund, who talked very loud about something.

According to his wont, Grünspan paced the room, with a saucer full of tea that he raised with both hands to his mouth. He was arrayed in a cherry-coloured velvet dressing-gown, embroidered with gold on the sleeves and collar. A small cap, also of velvet and embroidered likewise, covered the crown of his head. He was in great good humour, drank his tea very audibly, and briefly answered Sigismund's queries in the intervals. The latter, having to start for Warsaw, was lunching in a hurry.

The old aunt who kept house for the family was busy

packing his valise. "Sigismund, shall I put in any clean linen? Do you want clean linen?"

"All right," he replied. "Father, I tell you it is no good waiting. Albert Grosman should depart at once; he is seriously ill. You and Regina will see to the business."

"What is the matter with Albert?" Mela inquired; since the fire she no longer had any liking for him.

"Something out of order with his heart. That fire upset him terribly."

"Yes, it was a big fire; I myself was frightened," said Grünspan, and, reaching out his saucer for Mela to fill it, he only then perceived her grey, swollen face, with a dark ring under each eye. "Why so pale to-day; are you unwell? Our doctor will be coming presently to visit a workman in his home; we will bring him to see you."

"No, I am well, but I could not sleep at all."

"Oh, I know why you couldn't, Mela dear," he shouted in great glee, patting her cheeks fondly. "You could not but think of *him*.—Yes, I understand."

"Of whom?" she snapped.

"Of your future husband. He sends you his best love, and is coming round in the afternoon."

"I have no future husband; and if he comes, Sigismund may receive him for me."

"Father! do you hear what that goose is saying?" Sigismund cried with a scowl.

"Bah, Sigismund! all girls talk so before the wedding."

"What is the name of that—gentleman?" she asked, struck with a new idea.

"She has forgotten, has she? What's this new trick of hers?"

"Sigismund, I am not speaking to you, so you will please to let me absolutely alone!"

"But I am speaking to you, and you shall listen!" he roared, unbuttoning his uniform, as was always his custom when he was excited or displeased.

"Now don't, children!—Mela, I tell you his name is Leopold Landau, from Chenstohova; what other name could you

wish him to have? They have works at Sosnoviec, and the firm is Wolfish and Landau: a solid firm; the very name has weight."

"But none for me!" she replied resolutely.

Upon which old Grünspan proceeded to dress himself with the help of Francis, the footman. He had a private room of his own, and most magnificently appointed, but had never got used to it; he always preferred a dirty room to a clean one, and a crowded place to solitude. Mela said no more, while her aunt—an old woman in a red wig, with a parting of white thread down the middle, shrivelled, sallow, crooked, with sunken cheeks, a dusty-looking face, and drooping eyelids, out of which bleared eyes peered forth—went about the room, putting back into the sideboard the glasses and plates that she had immediately after breakfast washed in a large basin.

"Francis," she croaked, gathering up some crusts of bread and gnawed bones from the oilcloth on the table, "take these to your little ones."

"They'll do for dogs, not for my children!" he answered back haughtily and without the least respect for her.

"You are a stupid lout; they would make good soup."

"Then give them to the cook, and feed on the soup yourself."

"Peace, Francis; your tongue runs too fast. Give me some water in the basin," interjected Grünspan senior.

He was pretty nearly dressed, yet set about washing, dabbing his face with water very daintily, but with a loud intake of breath at each dab.

"Well, Mela, what have you to say against Leopold Landau?"

"Nothing; I do not know the man, and have seen him for the first time in my life."

"That's quite enough. If we conclude the affair, you'll have plenty of time to know each other better."

"Father, I tell you decidedly, and once for all, I will not marry him."

"You! what are you looking on here for, like a fly drown-

ing in milk!" he roared at Francis, who vanished at once, together with the aunt. The old man finished his ablutions, combed his hair, put on a handsome collar over a somewhat dirty shirt, tied his large cravat, which concealed the shirt very well, put his brush and comb into his pocket with his watch, surveyed his beard in the looking-glass, thrust certain long, white strings under his waistcoat, put on hat and overcoat, and lastly said, with his umbrella under his arm, putting on his warm winter gloves: "And why won't you marry him?"

"Because I do not love him. I loathe him; and besides——"

"Ha ha! my dear Mela has some little bees in her bonnet, I see."

"However that may be, I am not going to marry him," she returned with great firmness.

"Mela, I say nothing, for I am a most indulgent father. I might have commanded you, arranged everything without bringing you in at all. But I do not; why? Because I love you, Mela, and would give you time to think the matter over. Yes, you are a sensible girl, and will not want to prevent such excellent business; you'll think it over. Why, Mela, you will be the foremost person in all Sosnoviec. This I will point out to you clearly——"

But Mela would hear no more; she pushed her chair back abruptly and fled from the room.

"Those women always have some moonstruck fancies in their brains!" he growled. But he was put out neither by her refusal, nor by her flight from the room. He just finished his tea and went out to town.

For several days there was no word at all of marriage. Landau had gone, and Mela spent nearly the whole of her time with Rose, so as to see as little as possible of her father. He, at their infrequent meetings, would smile benignantly, pat her cheek, and ask: "Mela, do you still refuse Leopold Landau?" Usually she did not answer at all; but all this made her despondent and nervous to the utmost, having no idea what to do, nor what the end of it all would be. Now she began to wonder anxiously whether Vysocki

really cared for her. The doubt pierced her, sharp as a needle, and the repeated smart of the dark, tormenting doubt continued ever to increase. There were moments when, in spite of her by no means strengthless pride, she might have openly confessed her love to him, if only that he might tell her of his own. But Vysocki did not appear at her friend's any more, and she only once saw him—in the street, giving his arm to his mother. He bowed to Mela, and must have told his mother who she was, for she saw the latter's searching gaze fixed upon her.

One day she visited the Endelmans' house with Rose, but only in hope to meet Vysocki there; a faint hope indeed, for she did not know if he ever came to their house. They drove slowly through the town, it being a fine day; the streets were almost bare of mud, and full of people out for a walk, and of working-men in their holiday clothes, for that Saturday was a great Church festival. Shaya, who had come with them, was sitting on the front seat, with his legs carefully wrapped up in a plaid.

"Rose," he said, "I have a mind to travel; but guess where to? If you do, I'll take you along with me."

Chancing to look up at the sky of azure overhead, she answered at random: "To Italy!"

"Right! And we shall be able to start in a few days."

"I'll go with you, but only provided you take Mela with us as well."

"Let her come, it will be more pleasant on the way."

"Thanks, dear Rose; but you know I cannot. Father would never consent."

"What? not consent? If I am for it, who is Grünspan to be against it? I shall see him about it to-morrow, and next Saturday we shall smell the scent of orange-blossoms."

Rose knew Italy. She had been there with her father and with her sister-in-law; but she desired now to go to show the country to her friend. Shaya Mendelsohn knew it also, but not properly. When all Poland was covered with frost and snow, he often felt a capricious irresistible longing for sunshine and warmth; and it overcame him so that he would

have his trunks quickly packed, and, taking someone as a companion, go off by express train, stopping nowhere, to Italy, Nice, or Spain. But a fortnight later he would be home again. He could not live away from that town, *his* town; he missed those hours of bliss that he had to spend daily in his office, missed the clatter of the machines, the furious activity, the intense life of his factories—in short, he wanted Lodz, and had scarcely lost sight of it when he came back to it again with fond desire. Lodz attracted the man, just as a strong magnet will draw iron filings to itself.

"But, Papa! I am not coming home as soon as you!"

"That's all right; I am weary of Lodz by now; I too shall make a longer stay."

They came to a two-storeyed house, imitating (not too badly) a heavily built old Florentine palace. It stood in a garden off one of the side streets, which was railed off from it by an ivy-grown iron grating, at the top of which shone sharp gilt iron spikes, and blue majolica vases placed on pillars and rosy with flowering azaleas, that had been put there on purpose to honour that day's solemnity in the house of Endelman. The factory of the joint-stock company of the firm Kessler & Endelman closed one side of the garden, with its towering red wall, whose innumerable windows were glittering in the sun.

The coachman drove round a bed of flowers and shrubs, brought there from the greenhouse, and pulled up under a portico, supported on columns, the ivy-twined pillars of which sustained a terrace surrounded by a balustrade of wood, painted to imitate marble.

From a long vestibule, spread with a crimson carpet, in the midst of which there stood a great cluster of rhododendrons in full flower, they ascended to the first floor up a wide flight of stairs, spread with a crimson carpet and decorated with a double row of white azaleas that, like two long streaks of snow, stood out in strong relief against the walls, lined with dark-red damask. Both vestibule and stairs were flooded with electric light, reflected from the large mirrors in the antechamber.

Several lackeys, in black liveries and gold-laced coats, divested the new-comers of their cloaks.

"Really, it is very fine here!" Mela whispered, going upstairs with Rose.

"Fine indeed!" Shaya returned disdainfully. He plucked a few flowers carelessly, flung them on to the carpet and trampled them underfoot.

Endelman came to welcome them solemnly in the doorway, and ushered them with great ceremony into the drawing-room. "It is, Mr. President, most kind of you to have come. What, Mr. President?" He listened with his head on one side for the answer, being slightly deaf.

"I wanted to have a look at you, Endelman.—Well, how goes it, old boy?" And he clapped him on the shoulder with great familiarity.

"Thanks awfully. I am well, and so is my wife, what?"

The noisy talk in the drawing-room died away when they came in. About fifteen people rose to greet the "cotton king," who, attired in a long black capote and wearing high patent-leather boots, contrasted strikingly with the evening dress of the other guests. He walked through the drawing-room with a gracious smile, shook hands with some, patted others on the back, nodded to the womenfolk, and surveyed the room superciliously, with half-closed eyelids. Kessler junior wheeled an arm-chair round to him, into which he dropped heavily, and was immediately surrounded by a circle of visitors.

"Fatigued, Mr. President? Have a glass of champagne; first-rate brand, what?"

"Yes, I think I will," he declared, wiping his spectacles with a coloured pocket-handkerchief, and, after putting them on, proceeded to reply to the many questions asked.

"How is your health, Mr. President?"

"Is your appetite restored, sir?"

"When are you going to a watering-place?"

"You are looking in good condition, sir!"

"And for what reason should I look poorly?" he responded smiling, but a little bored and scornful, listening to the continued chorus of voices, and turning his eyes to where Rose

stood surrounded by a group of women in gay dresses.

A confused din of voices, rather too noisy, rose in the adjoining room, where a buffet had been fixed up; and also from a large bevy of women seated in the centre of the drawing-room.

Presently Endelman came in, preceded by a footman bearing a glass, and a bottle of champagne in an ice-pail on a silver tray. Endelman himself snipped the wires, and, when the cork flew out, poured out the frothing liquor and offered it to Shaya with his own hands.

Mendelsohn sipped the wine slowly, tasting it like a connoisseur. "Not bad, Endelman. Much obliged."

"I should think so: eleven roubles a bottle!"

A goodly number of chairs, low stools, and cosy armchairs formed a circle in the centre of which Shaya was seated like a monarch amidst his courtiers and vassals. He unbuttoned his coat, and the long tails floated on to the floor, and his black satin waistcoat was seen, from which peeped out the two white strings that the orthodox Jews wear. He crossed his legs so high in the air that one foot came to the level of the heads of those who sat near and inclined them at every word he uttered; and whenever he opened his mouth, they would stop short in mid-sentence. All eyes were solemnly fixed on his great dark orbs, flashing bright under red eyelids, and upon every motion of his thin parchment-like hand, with its blunt finger-tips and bitten finger-nails, as it stroked his white beard and close-clipped white hair, through which his pinkish scalp was to be seen. His face was of a light saffron tint, thin and restless, extremely so; his nose hooked and (his front teeth having gone) so long that it hung over his mouth.

He spoke very slowly, articulating every word and puckering his white, protuberant forehead, wrinkled in thick folds, with deeply sunken temples.

All the poverty-stricken 'one-million men,' and the wretched men who had only hundreds of thousands, bent low in homage to his many millions; Jews, Germans, and Poles formed an harmonious circle of good feeling round the man.

In the presence of that mighty one whose power bore them all down and hypnotized even the least sensitive, race-antagonisms vanished, rivalries and hatreds disappeared; nay, even personal feuds. "Before the pike they all were gudgeons, and waited anxiously for him to swallow them up, when it should please him so to do"; so David Halpern used to describe the attitude of the lesser manufacturers towards Shaya. But Shaya was in a good humour that day, said not a word about business, and even vouchsafed to jest with some of the men.

"Kipman, have you a roll of percale under your clothes? Your belly looks as if you had."

"Why should I have a roll of percale there? I'm not well, and have to go to Karlsbad very soon."

Thus did the Lodz millionaires confabulate together, and the drawing-room grew more and more lively as fresh visitors poured in.

Mrs. Endelman did the honours of the house with great *savoir vivre* and dignity of mien. Her husband seconded her most efficiently; his piercing voice was heard every now and then, crying: "What?"

The rustle of silks, the babble of talk, the scents of flowers and perfumes, were slowly filling that immense *salon*, one of the finest in all Lodz. The company were constantly breaking up into separate groups, which by no means sufficed to crowd the great drawing-room and the adjoining rooms, with quantities of furniture scattered about.

The main *salon* took up the whole of one corner of the house, with windows looking out on both the gardens and the upstanding windows of the factories beyond them. There were yellow silk blinds that kept out the sun and shed a golden twilight all round. In this rich glimmer were seen the picture-frames, indistinctly outlined on the walls, the bronze ornaments of the furniture, and of the bright-hued silk hangings, with branches portrayed upon them in pale green, and flowers of the most exquisite draughtsmanship; the pallid verdure of the hangings, sprinkled with embroidered flowers, seemed to frame the walls they surrounded and form a lovely

setting for the ceiling above. This, like a veil withdrawn, seemed to open upon an admirable painting, with scenes *à la* Watteau—a meadow, interspersed with trees; a rivulet that meandered in silvery windings over green and flowery lawns, on which lambs were grazing, with blue ribbons tied round their snow-white necks; and a troop of shepherds in eighteenth-century wigs and shepherdesses in short costumes, dancing quadrilles to the sounds of a pipe, played by a faun with auburn hair.

In the drawing-room itself, a graceful Diana of Fontainebleau appeared in bronze, surrounded with white and purple roses that climbed with a gentle forward bend over the marble pedestal, and up to the greenish grey of the statue, which they besprinkled with lively colours. It was in front of this statue that Mendelsohn sat with the manufacturers of Lodz at his feet.

Several sets of furniture in the purest Louis XIV style—white and gold, with painted or enamelled ornaments in tints of white and green—stood close to the walls, beneath groups of paintings, most of which were of great value. The Endelmans possessed quite a gallery of pictures, which they had collected with enthusiasms rather than with the solid judgment of connoisseurs. Besides these sets of furniture, there were more in other styles: plenty of stands, variously inlaid and encrusted, of arm-chairs from China—gilded bamboos upholstered with gaudy silks, gilded flower-stands, filled with flowers. And in an open fire-place, with a very tasteful chimney-piece, there was a great blazing fire, which threw a light alternately golden and blood-red upon several young ladies. Amongst these Rose was sitting, when Mrs. Endelman, superb in her dark cherry-red velvet gown, embellished (according to the then prevailing fashion) with imitations of precious stones all over her very full corsage, came up to her.

"If you are not enjoying yourselves, I'll send you Bernard."

"Have you anybody still more entertaining?"

"Has he bored you already?"

"Oh, he'll do for daily use, but for to-day's solemnity I should enjoy a change."

"Then I'll bring you Kessler or Boroviecki."

"What? Is Mr. Boroviecki here too!" she ejaculated with lively interest; for she had perceived Mrs. Likiert there not a minute since.

"All Lodz is here," Mrs. Endelman answered with great complacency. Her closed lips opened to smile, and she passed on with majestic steps, her head surrounded with a halo of well-curled iron-grey hair, fixed with diamond pins. Her large, broad face, set off with a thin, clear-cut nose and tiny black eyes, deeply shaded about the lids, beamed with pride.

At the buffet that had been set up in one of the side apartments a good number of men were standing about, among whom were Boroviecki, Travinski, and Müller senior, redder in the face than usual. He talked loud and spat on the floor contemptuously, in mockery of the Jews, and provoked by the sumptuosity of the Endelmans' establishment and the lordly attitudes they struck. Boroviecki twirled his moustache and smiled faintly; Travinski was contemplating his wife, who for the first time appeared at Lodz in so large an assembly. She was sitting amid a number of other ladies, all of whom she eclipsed by her high-born charm, and by her dress —a perfection of elegant simplicity. She must have been but little interested in the frivolous chatter of the others, for she replied in few words, and feasted her eyes on the paintings and works of art scattered about the drawing-room. The profusion of silks, of laces, of velvets, and their jewel adornments, glittering with every colour of the rainbow, above which the ladies' heads rose as in a gorgeous setting, framed her own figure marvellously, and brought out to the very best effect her own white gown, buttoned up to the throat, and girt about the waist with a golden belt.

"Who is that enchanting woman?" Grosglik made inquiry.

"She is my wife, my dear sir."

"Ah, how I congratulate you! She's not a woman, she's an angel, and four times over!" the banker cried out enthusias-

tically, and insisted on Travinski's introducing him to her.

"You, Mr. Boroviecki, are possibly unacquainted with some of the ladies here?" Bernard remarked.

"With a great many; but will you kindly introduce me?"

"That is my special function to-day."

He went arm in arm with Charles round the room, where a long-haired *maestro* was striking a few preliminary notes on the piano which had been carried in out of one of the smaller rooms.

"What! is there to be music as well?"

"Ask me rather what there is not to be; I could answer more easily. Is this your first appearance at a reception of my sister-in-law's?"

"Yes, I somehow was never able to come till now."

"I'm sorry for you."

"Because I never came before?"

"Yes. You would have been bored already, and now you are about to be," Bernard replied flippantly.

"Oh, surely not."

"Now, attention! We're to begin (a round million!)," he whispered, introducing him to Mada Müller.

"Ah, but we are well acquainted!" Miss Müller cried, much pleased, and stretching out her hand.

"Well, say something nice to each other. I am coming back for you presently."

"Something nice? That I have heard this minute," said Boroviecki, standing beside her.

"Does it count at all?" Mada said artlessly.

"It does, and I shall remember it well."

"Oh, how very kind you are!" she exclaimed, and hid her face in her fan.

He eyed her intently, and she felt herself blushing from head to foot. She looked very pretty just then in her pink silk dress, trimmed with white lilies of the valley. Her yellow hair, dressed in Greek style, flowed down to her milk-white throat, dusted, as it were, with golden freckles that took a deeper hue when she blushed; and her eyelashes (golden rings round her china-blue eyes) drooped over

them bashfully, for she did not venture to look at him.

But Bernard was back again. Charles bowed, and they left her wistfully looking where he went, but not daring to ask him to return.

On introducing him to a plain girl, so very freckled she was almost brown, and whose head and face and thin throat were abundantly powdered and bediamonded, Bernard whispered again: "Whether her teeth are her own, I can't say; the diamonds are undoubtedly hers."

"As a cicerone, you are unrivalled."

"I have a reputation as such. Now I'll show you a ruin. Only fifty thousand in cash, but if her father gets burnt out again—which may easily happen—her dowry will be twice doubled."

A pale girl, no longer young, and with an anæmic look about her, was smiling a feebly sorrowful smile, that showed her gums and a few teeth left in them.

Boroviecki bowed and passed on quickly; the girl's face, so very ghastly, made a painful impression upon him, like a stopped timepiece of old, cracked, dusty Saxony porcelain.

"A hundred thousand, and whims for double the amount; mind for three groschen only," he said before introducing him to Fela, a friend of Rose, who was eternally fluttering—tossing her hair about, darting her eyes about, moving feet and arms, mouth and eyebrows, and at times breaking into a merry childish laugh—and yet so charming, so pleasantly amusing, prattling in a voice so adorably naïve, that Boroviecki could not help saying:

"She's a delightful child!"

"She is; but under this delightful child there lurks a coming Messalina!"

Boroviecki had no time for protest: Rose was at hand.

"Rose Mendelsohn! How much? Her name tells you that by itself.—The other, the one in grey, is Mela Grünspan. Without stating the amount of her dowry I can declare that she is the best and most intelligent girl in all Lodz," he said, and introduced Charles to the two friends, who looked at him with scrutinizing eyes.

"Too thin!" was Rose's verdict, given with such an air that Mela could not refrain from laughing.

Bernard introduced him to a score of women, young and old, giving him personal information respecting every one, and, his work done, set him free in the centre of the room. Taking up his station close to one of the walls, Charles viewed this assembly with keen interest. Opposite to him there was a doorway, hung with a green and gold *portière*, and opening on a boudoir in which sat Mrs. Likiert, with her eyes fixed on him. He did not notice her at the time, absorbed as he was by the bright-coloured groups he saw amid furniture, flowers, and greenery, sparkling with gems like a jeweller's shop-front; and by the black throngs of men in evening dress standing about on the background of those walls and of the women's splendid dresses—as a lot of ugly crabs would look crawling over a piece of tapestry. Several elderly ladies, almost bowed down under their laces, gold, and jewels, were sitting close to him, and speaking so loud that he withdrew to some distance.

"Tell me, is it not magnificent? could not a splendid painting be made from it?" Mrs. Endelman asked him, as she, passing by, caught him up in her wake.

"It is incomparable."

"Now I'm taking you to make somebody's acquaintance, but warn you first that she is very beautiful and very dangerous."

"The worse for me," he murmured, with so demure a bearing that Mrs. Endelman tapped him with her fan and laughed.

"You are a dangerous man."

"Quite so. Very harmful to myself," he answered very seriously, as he accompanied her to a tiny boudoir furnished in the Chinese style.

Presently he was making his bow to a celebrated Lodzian beauty, seated very much at her ease on a yellow Chinese sofa, with a cup of tea in her hand.

"You must forgive my audacity," she began, "if I confess that I have long been wishing to know you."

"Too great an honour, madam," he answered, with no little vexation, and casting a look towards the drawing-room, whence he wished someone might come to rescue him.

"But," she went on to say, "I have a grievance against you."

"Can it not possibly be forgotten?"

"No doubt, if you show proper signs of repentance."

"I do repent most sincerely, though I do not know of what."

"My grievance is that you have fascinated my husband."

"Has he complained I was a tedious companion?"

"On the contrary, he told me he had never yet spent his time so pleasantly."

"Then, madam, instead of complaining, you ought to feel grateful—and doubly so."

"Doubly so? How?"

"First because he has enjoyed himself; and then because he has not prevented your drives to the suburbs by staying at home," he said, stressing the last words; and, glancing keenly into her face, he saw her brows contract with alarm.

She laughed a laugh that rang false, and fingered the fine pearl necklace, set with diamonds, that adorned her marvellously well-shaped neck. In these movements the gloves which reached up to her shoulders slipped down for some distance, revealing the sculptural classic beauty of her arms; and her breath came so fast that her bosom, only half concealed, rose and fell tumultuously.

She was truly a very beautiful woman, but only with cold Greek beauty; her eyes, steel-grey and without lustre, like the panes in a frozen window, peered out under brows of a deep artificial black. For some time they thus crossed glances. At last she said under her breath: "Why has Lucy not come here?"

A shade of irony flickered in her eyes.

"I do not know, madam, because I don't know whom you mean," he answered, with perfect external calm.

"Mrs. Zuker."

"I was not aware that lady's name was Lucy."

"Is it long since you saw her last?"

"To answer your question I must first understand it."

"You don't understand? Don't you indeed?" she drawled, smiling and showing, behind her lips, that were shaped like a Cupid's bow, a row of exceedingly fine teeth.

"Is this a judicial inquiry?" he asked somewhat angrily, teased by her meaning looks and the intention to annoy him, plainly visible in her behaviour. She slightly knitted her brows and fixed her large Juno-like orbs upon him. She greatly resembled a statue of Juno.

"No, my dear sir, I am only asking about Lucy—our common, our intimate friend. For I love her not less than you do, though possibly not as you do," she added pleasantly.

"That Mrs. Zuker is worthy of love I must believe, since you say it."

"Worthy, too, of a love that is not ashamed of itself, Mr. Boroviecki. We are to one another like sisters, and do not conceal anything from each other."

"Well, then?" he asked, in a voice that was husky with exasperation. He bitterly resented Lucy's having betrayed their secret to that classical-faced doll.

"Then you ought to trust me and endeavour to gain my goodwill, which may often be of much use to you."

"Very well. And I begin directly."

He seated himself at once on the sofa and imprinted a kiss on her bare shoulder; for her dress was very low, and held up on either side only by a string of jewels.

"This is not the way to a faithful brotherly and sisterly friendship," she observed, drawing back with a slight smile.

"But such wonderful shoulders have nothing to do with friendship," he retorted; "nor has such exquisite beauty either."

"Neither have the lawless instincts of cave-men," she continued, rising and drawing herself up, wonderful in the shapely contours of her form. She then settled her artistically dressed blond hair, that had become somewhat disordered in the late bout, over her brows and temples, and (seeing that he also had risen) went on to say: "Do you stay here a little

longer, I beg. We have been here together just long enough for you to be suspected of making love to me."

"Would you resent such a thing, lady?"

"Would Lucy not resent it, Mr. Charles? And was I not right in calling you a cave-man?"

"A woman's man, rather."

"Well, I am at home on Thursdays. Pray come a little earlier than the others."

"Shall we meet again to-day?"

"No, I am leaving directly. At home I have a sick child whom I have left for your sake."

"I regret I am unable to express my gratitude as I should wish to do," he cried, with dancing eyes fixed upon her arms and neck.

She raised her fan, gave him a nod, and withdrew, smiling to conceal the embarrassment she felt.

"Mr. Boroviecki!" Bernard called to him. "Mrs. Travinska is asking for you. Ah, where has she gone, that director's wife, that handsome woman?"

"Gone forth to slay and ravage with her devastating eyes!" he laughed.

"A most tedious female!"

"Do you go to her at-homes?"

"What on earth should I do there? Only her past, present, or future votaries and lovers go.—Well, we are waiting for you."

Boroviecki felt so bored that he had no mind to meet Mrs. Travinska, but meant to slip out unobserved through a back way to the front door, and so take French leave. Passing, however, beneath the *portière* of the nearest boudoir, he came face to face with Mrs. Likiert, his former beloved one.

She drew back and turned round; but Charles, irresistibly drawn to her by the look in her eyes, followed her footsteps.

For a year's space they had not spoken to each other. They had fallen apart suddenly, and without a word of explanation. Sometimes they would meet at the play or in the street, and would bow from a distance, as if they hardly knew each

other. And yet her pale features not unfrequently came before his mind's eye, proud, sad, in bitter and reproachful silence.

He had several times thought of entering into conversation with her, but had not ventured. He knew he should be embarrassed as to what to say, for he did not love her any more. But now this unexpected meeting pierced him with the sharpest and most bewildering pain.

"It is long since I saw you last," she said quietly.

"Emma! Emma," he stammered, profoundly troubled as he looked into her pallid face.

"Please to come; the concert is about to begin," Mrs. Endelman said, darting a swift glance at them both.

At that moment the pianoforte accompaniment resounded, and the drawing-room vibrated to a clear melodious soprano voice, singing a sweet song. The din of voices subsided, and every eye was fixed upon the singer. But these two heard only the uneasy throbbing of their own hearts.

Emma, with a screen between her and the fire, sat down in a low chair, but the flame passed through in golden jets and reddened her face, white with tints of lilac, but very sorrowful—the face of a beautiful woman who is losing her youth. Boroviecki, standing by her side, looked down on her with half-closed eyes. Her face was still very fair, but marked by some ravages of time. On her sunken temples there lay a net as of tiny wrinkles that descended as far as to her eyes—those queenly eyes of hers, black upon the ground of their whites, pale bluish, like the eyes of a child; they shone with a sombre glitter, under her long, heavy lids, with their tracery of veins, dark blue and thin almost to invisibility. Beneath those eyes, too, were livid stains above the ivory whiteness of each cheek.

Her high and very beautiful forehead was uncovered: she had black hair, in which there gleamed a few silver threads. It was combed over her ears, where hung two very large diamonds. Her mouth was a deep purple, perfectly well shaped, but wearing a pained expression, and the corners drooped towards the strongly marked under jaw. Her face

and her slightly bent head expressed the fatigue which is the result of a long and distressing illness. Even that mouth, which alone had remained youthful, was like a fading pomegranate flower; and in all her face one could read that melancholy, almost bitter amiability of a woman who had cruelly suffered through love. Her delicate lineaments, which instantly reflected every feeling that passed through her heart and mind, were writhen with nervous tremors and responded even to the unconscious echoes of whatever impressed her.

Her dress was trimmed about the throat and bosom with dark yellow lace and strings of rubies and amethysts; and her figure was so supple and graceful that she might have been mistaken for a young girl.

She sat fanning herself gently without looking at him, though her quick glances took in the whole of the boudoir. She knew his eyes were on her, and that his burning gaze penetrated all the bitterness of her sorrowing heart, in which there glowed the embers of a strange and torturing fire. He was standing so near that she could hear him breathe, and his clothes rustled as he bent forward; she saw his fingers clutch at a flower-stand. She could lift her eyes and enjoy his sweet and so long expected presence; but she did not. She sat motionless.

He knew her to be of those who love but once, whose dreamers' souls, enamoured of an ideal life, are deaf and blind to the world's pettinesses, full of a passion that craves to be loved, and to give themselves eternally and altogether to the loved one; yet at the same time proud and full of the sense of their dignity. It was precisely that which had always most grated upon him. He preferred liaisons with ordinary women, under whose faultless exterior there beats a small feminine heart, given up to sex or domesticity. Such a person will never make a tragedy out of any transient amour; she will wind up with a burst of tears, an attack of insomnia, and another lover in the end. Or else she goes back to her temporarily interrupted household duties, and returns once again to what she was before—nothing.

"What can I say to her?" he asked himself once more.

"She sings most beautifully, doesn't she?" It was she who, without looking at him, had broken silence.

"Indeed she does," he answered hurriedly, following with his eyes the singer, who, at the end of her performance, was surrounded with men, and taken round to the refreshment room.

The piano was hushed, and the noise of talk rose louder than ever in the drawing-room. The lackeys were handing round ices, cakes, sweets, and champagne, bottles of which were every moment popping off.

"Have you started your new factory yet?"

"Not yet, but I hope to do so in autumn or about that time," he said in astonishment, expecting some very different sort of question.

Eyes met eyes at last, and they saw into the bottom of each other's souls. Emma was first to avert her gaze, for her eyes were dimmed with tears. She then said: "With all my heart do I wish you success. In all things—I hope you believe in my sincerity."

"More than in anyone else's."

"I am what I was at the beginning—I have not changed." Her voice shook with infinite pain.

"Thanks," he replied, bowing his head.

"Then—farewell!" she added, rising; but the words were uttered in so stern a tone that he shuddered at them, with the foreboding that some dreadful thing might take place.

Greatly disturbed, he said under the impulse of his sudden terror: "Emma! I must see you—unless you have quite forgotten me, or think me the vilest of wretches, let me come to you. I must come—speak with you—tell you—— Oh, answer me only one word, I beg of you!"

"They are noticing us. Adieu! I have no more to say. The past has died out of my heart so entirely that I have forgotten all; if I do remember anything, it is with shame." She gave him one last glance as he stood there, pale as death —and walked away.

Those last words were untrue; but by that untruth she

had taken all her revenge; and now, walking about in the *salon*, she felt so much regret at having spoken them that she could not repress the craving to return, throw herself at his feet, and entreat his forgiveness. But she did not yield to it. She walked on deliberately, smiling at her friends and acquaintances, exchanging friendly looks and words, though she scarce knew who they were. She had come to the Endelmans on purpose to see Charles, and she had decided to do so after long months of agony and fearful struggles with her melancholy and with the love which was eating her up. She wanted to see him, to speak to him; for at the core of her heart, beneath all those accumulations of sufferings and of disappointments, there was still a tiny flamelet of hope that perhaps he loved her yet; that possibly something unexplained had driven them apart, but only for the time being; and that something once explained, once removed——

Now she returned; and her heart was like a grave in which all that was living had decayed into inanimate remnants, given over to the great dead silence of night everlasting.

Meantime Boroviecki repaired to the refreshment room. And indeed he was in need of refreshment. He had swallowed her last words as a wolf may swallow the bait of frozen fat in which a spring has been inserted: little by little uncoiling, it tears the beast's entrails apart with intolerable agony. Anything else he could have borne: tears, reproaches, despair—anything but that contempt, which he felt like a blow in the face. And yet he had to bear it. Mrs. Endelman had taken him to admire her art collections and paintings, which had been put together in several rooms in a somewhat random way. But she was compelled to relinquish him to Grosglik, with whom he had some business dealings.

When the concert ended, the company broke up again into groups. Shaya, surrounded by his court, made for the buffet, and Mrs. Travinska now reigned supreme in the drawing-room, in the midst of a circle of girls, among whom were Rose and Mela.

From time to time, Mrs. Endelman would approach someone and say triumphantly: "All Lodz is here to-day; and

they are all enjoying themselves perfectly, are they not?"

"Wonderfully!" everyone would reply, stifling a yawn; for, as a matter of fact, no one enjoyed himself really.

"Mr. Endelman!" she cried to her husband, who at once came up, dancing as he came, his fat paunch and unwieldy legs making him a rather ridiculous object. "Mr. Endelman, let the ices be brought into the Chinese boudoir."

"Brought in at once?" he asked, with one hand at his ear to catch the answer.

"At once; and champagne for the men." Then she added, in a lower voice: "They are enjoying themselves well, aren't they?"

"What? Ah, yes, very well, very well indeed. Almost all our champagne is gone." And presently, as Bernard happened to pass: "Those louts!" he whispered in his ear; "they swill our champagne as they would Bavarian beer, what?"

"Well, but you have plenty left in the cellar."

"Yes, I have wine, but they have no manners. To drink, and drink, and drink, as if it all cost nothing!"

"O you funny fellow! I must tell all Lodz about you."

"What? No, Bernard, no! don't be such a fool!"

He paid no heed to him, though, and at once sat down beside Rose to tell her.

"Gentlemen, the ladies have no fun all by themselves," Endelman then shouted to the young fellows assembled in the refreshment room, in order to get them away from the champagne. Not one of them stirred.

Bernard was the only man to entertain the ladies. Seated opposite Mrs. Travinska, he set the conversation going, now and again letting off such curious paradoxes that Rose, in her efforts not to laugh, almost bent double, while Mrs. Travinska laughed quite easily and openly at his buffooneries, as though condescending to them. But her eyes were turned towards her husband, now talking with Boroviecki, close to the statue of Diana, and in voices so loud that she could catch a word now and then.

The rest of the visitors were passably bored. Mada walked about as if half asleep, ostensibly admiring the pictures,

but in reality trying to get nearer to Charles. The more elderly women were dozing in easy-chairs, or assembled in boudoirs to hear the latest gossip. The younger ones crowded to hear Bernard confabulating with Mrs. Travinska, but looked with a mournful air towards the refreshment room, where they heard the voices of their husbands or their fathers, loud with imbibed champagne. Little by little, weariness crept over the whole of the drawing-room; and the men looked at one another with more than tedium, even with hostility—as if the other were somehow responsible for the nausea felt by both.

Toilets had been discussed; the jewels with which women and maidens were literally burdened had been appraised; the drawing-room, the host and hostess, nay, the guests themselves, had been run down; what else was there to do? For there was nothing in common between the men and women who had come together, nothing to unite them in a whole. Why had they come? Because in Lodzian society it was good form to frequent the Endelmans', good form to go into raptures over their collection of paintings, just as it was good form to go to the play occasionally, to give something to the poor now and then, to complain of Lodz, to travel abroad, and so on. They had, though with difficulty, bowed their necks to the yoke of the forms and customs generally accepted in the world: but these were, all the same, foreign to their nature, and in truth they really cared for none of those things.

"Mr. Grosglik, just look at that madonna: it's a Dresden madonna."

"A splendid painting!" old Lieberman drawled, who, hands in pockets, thrust forth his great abdomen, and, sinking his chin on his chest, eyed the frame of the picture very closely.

Here Endelman interfered. "It's a painting that got a medal. See here, you have: *'Médaille d'or.'* It's a great painting, and cost a mint of money, what?"

"How much?" Grosglik croaked, stroking his stiff black side-whiskers, that hung on either side of his round face, with the fore-finger of his left hand, on which a bloodstone

gleamed in a gold ring. His whiskers were like mutton-chops, and the rest of his face was clean-shaven. It was his way to lift his chin so high that two thick folds of skin were formed at the nape of his neck, over the back of his collar, thus making him not unlike a short, fat pig trying in vain to pull down some linen from a fence. His right hand was usually in the pocket of his white waistcoat. "How much?" he repeated softly, as he always spoke, and with a serious mien, raising his eyebrows, delineated in two crescents on his bulging forehead, and in powerful contrast with his hoary hair and rosy complexion.

"I don't remember the sum; that's my secretary's business," Endelman replied in an offhand manner.

"Just look at this *genre* painting: it is really moving, it's alive!"

"First-rate colouring!" someone growled.

"Ay, and the capital it represents is still more so!"

"Ya, ya! the very frame of this landscape cost a large sum," said big Knaabe ponderously, as he tapped his cigar-holder on the bronze frame with the air of a connoisseur.

"But Mr. Endelman can afford gold frames, for whoever can afford a hat can afford a head to put it in," Grosglik remarked jocosely. He had a weakness for always illustrating his arguments with examples.

"That, Mr. Grosglik, is the saying of a genius," Bernard said, managing somehow not to laugh at him.

"I can afford such a thing too," the banker returned with due modesty.

"Gentlemen, here is another madonna, a copy, indeed, from Cimabue, but superior to the original. I give you my word it is, for it cost me four thousand roubles, what?" he exclaimed, seeing a sceptical smile curl the banker's lips.

"Let's have a look. I like madonnas particularly. I bought a madonna by Murillo for my Mary. She loves to have such paintings in her room, so why should I not buy her one?"

They continued in the same fashion, criticizing a good many pictures, and stopped in front of a big painting taking

up one half of the wall and representing the descent into Hades.

"Quite a large work," Knaabe observed approvingly.

Endelman was for giving the subject of the picture, but Grosglik cut in with some heat: "The artist is a common grave-digger, and the painting has no sense! Why give us such dismal things? Whenever I see a funeral, my heart is out of order for a couple of days, and I have to see the doctor. If a man has to die, better let him get drowned."

Here Mrs. Endelman came up. "The concert, second part! Please come to the drawing-room."

"We heartily congratulate you on such a collection, Mr. and Mrs. Endelman," cried the banker.

"What are they going to have in the drawing-room now?"

"Here's the program; all in print!" Bernard said, handing him a long strip of red cloth, embellished with a hand-painted picture, and with the printed program in French.

They entered the drawing-room, now quiet again. A couple of hired professionals were giving a dialogue in the French language. The men, crowding about the refreshment-room doorway, heard it with but little interest, and presently returned to their forsaken bottles and glasses; but the women were most attentive, listening greedily to the two reciters, playing the parts of two naïve lovers, who had unfortunately been captured by mountain banditti, carried off, and separated from each other. They had just met again, and related their respective mishaps with such wealth of prurient simplicity and of ribald elegance that the ladies were shaking with laughter, and applauded them with the greatest enthusiasm at every moment.

"Ah, mon Dieu, mon Dieu! Très joli, très joli!" Mrs. Cohn was crying in vociferous raptures. The wife of one of the manufacturers, she glittered with gems like a jeweller's shop-front; her small eyes, which looked yet smaller for the masses of fat round them, were weeping tears of delight; and she enjoyed herself so intensely that her heavy, flabby cheeks trembled like blancmange, as did also her plump arms,

which resembled big rolling-pins encased in black velvet.

"Those players, Endelman: how much have they cost you?" Grosglik inquired.

"One hundred roubles and their supper! But they're worth a thousand, since my guests get so much enjoyment out of them."

"Well," Bernard inquired of Boroviecki, "how do you like my sister-in-law?"

"She is an exceptional woman, whatever they may say: a patron of art, a collector."

"In order to be praised. In her opinion, her collection raises her far above the dull blind herd of millionaires. It's no question of love for art. Only ambition."

"The motive is nothing. And, that set aside, she really has a considerable number of good works of art."

"Oh, but her system of procuring them is peculiar. If there's a picture she likes, she makes her approaches with the utmost caution, asks of all connoisseurs and dealers how much it may be worth, and then haggles and bargains until she's quite sure she cannot possibly lose if she buys."

"Are you coming to the hotel? Kurovski is to be there today."

"Surely; it is two months since I met him."

"Please make my excuses to your brother and Mrs. Endelman: I have to be off directly."

They shook hands and Charles went out unobserved. When he got to Piotrovska Street, twilight was falling already, and shop-fronts and street lamps were lighted.

Once out in the fresh air, he drew a long breath of relief. He had waited to leave Mrs. Endelman's until Mrs. Likiert had gone, in order to prevent remarks and comments being made, which had not a little injured Emma's reputation as it was. The waiting had been very distasteful to him, caring, as he did, neither for the company, nor for the recitation, nor for the new picture on view. And he still remained under the blow given him by his extraordinary conversation with Emma—and by her last words especially. Nor could he

clearly realize his own state of mind; never yet had he felt so unstrung, so wounded.

"I am scorned, I am hated by her!" he thought, and the pain of that scorn, that hatred, sank deeper and deeper into his soul.

CHAPTER XII

OUTSIDE the door of his house, on the sidewalk, a woman with her four children was awaiting him, the same who had applied to him for compensation after her husband's death.

"Honoured sir, I come to your Honour with a humble petition," she entreated him, falling down at his feet.

"What do you want?" he answered sternly.

"What you promised me, honoured sir—that the factory should pay me the compensation due, because the machine tore my husband to pieces."

"Oh, you are Mihalak's widow!" he said, now more kindly, noting her eyes, red with tears, and her haggard, livid face, on which misery had set its stamp.

"Yes, Mihalak's widow, who have been petitioning here since last autumn."

"They are to pay you two hundred roubles. You ought to go to Mr. Bauer, who will settle the whole affair; it is in his hands."

"I saw that German to-day: that pestilential fellow! He had me driven downstairs, and bade the manservant tell me I should be put in prison if I ever came again molesting him on one of his holidays."

"Come next Monday to Mr. Bucholc's office; they will pay you there. Be patient for one day more."

"Ay, honoured sir, I have been patient. Summer passed by, and the time of potato-digging likewise; winter brought hard times, and spring is now at hand; and still I am patient, honoured sir." She fell a-weeping noiselessly, and looked at him with an immense helplessness in her eyes.

"Well, come on Monday, as I have said"; and with the words Charles went into the house and ordered Matthew to take the woman a rouble.

"What, is she still there? Three times already have I turned her out of the entrance-passage, and like a bitch with her puppies she comes again, whining outside the door! What's to be done? I shall have to give her a beating."

"You will have to give her this rouble, and not so much as lay a finger on her, do you hear?" he cried in a rage, and went on to his own room.

Max, smoking his pipe, was lying on the ottoman. Murray, clad in black and very greatly excited, sat near him, looking into the bottom of his hat, that was in his hand. His jaw, which seemed always chewing something, moved up and down more quickly than usual, and he had shrugged his hump so assiduously that half his coat was now lying on his shoulders.

Charles gave each of them a nod as he passed through to his room. He set in order the letters on his desk, arranged the flowers, cast a long look at Anka's photograph, and opened a letter that had come in for him, but did not read it. He put it down, paced the room, sat down now on one chair, now on another, and looked out of the window.

He was like a man struck with a mortal blow, who cannot make out what has come upon him, who reels about and seeks instinctively to regain his senses and fix his thoughts on any subject, no matter what. He could not blot out the rankling memory of Emma's last words.

At last he sat down by the window, gazing vacantly at the dying day, with its last fires fading away over the town. The room became flooded with a turbid dingy greyness, bringing with it those low spirits, that despondency, which he now experienced. He did not desire his lamp to be lighted, but sat in the gloom, listening to the noises that lulled the drowsy street.

Max's voice in the next room was seldom audible, but he could hear the dull heavy tones of the Englishman, saying: "What would you have? Even a dog gets accustomed to

its own kennel. Do you know, when I go to see the Smolinskis, I feel so wonderfully warm, so sweetly at peace, so cosy, so bright, so full of gladness, that I cannot think of returning to my lodgings without dismay—to those bare walls, those dark and chilly apartments. And I have taken my resolution this very day, so disgusted am I with bachelordom."

"To propose—for the *n*-th time?" Max grunted.

"Yes, I shall propose; the wedding will take place at once after Easter. I shall take a holiday in June, and set out to England with my wife, and see my family. Oh!" he went one to say, "how beautiful she looked in church to-day!"

"And who is she, this chosen one of yours?"

"You shall know to-morrow."

Max felt some curiosity. "A Jewish, a German, or a Polish girl?" he asked.

"Oh, a Polish girl."

"Then if she's a Catholic, she will not have you. They all cling to their religion as hard as drunkards to their cups."

"That is no matter. Let me tell you: as soon as I'm engaged, I shall turn Catholic. It's all the same to me. Your religion is love; mine too!"

"But—for love—will no one but a wife do?"

"Only a wife can be loved and honoured at the same time; only a wife can be worthy of adoration."

"Slowly, slowly, my dear Murray! Do not anticipate! You have never been married yet; couldn't you first make a trial trip?"

Boroviecki appeared, interrupting their talk. "Max, will you come and see Kurovski?"

"I will. Are you going out now?"

"Yes. Good-night, Murray."

"I shall accompany you," the latter said. And pulling his coat down, he went out with a farewell to Max.

The streets were empty of people, and silence filled this section of the city. The low, ground-floor houses looked into the street with bright unshuttered casements, so that the interior of each dwelling was in full sight.

Boroviecki held his peace, but Murray, peeping in with interest, often stopped and said: "Pray look there; how beautiful!" And he pointed to some casement whose thin blind let them see a large room behind it, and the family seated round a table in the centre, under a suspended lamp.

The red-faced paterfamilias, with a napkin tucked round his neck, was ladling out soup from a steaming tureen on to the plates of his children, who followed each of his movements with hungry eyes. The mother, a buxom German Frau, with fair hair, blue eyes, and a smiling face, wore a blue apron, and was setting plates before a grey-haired old woman and an aged man, who knocked the ashes out of his pipe and seemed to relate some event.

"How very happy they all must be!" Murray whispered, devouring this everyday scene with envious eyes.

"Yes, no doubt. They are warm, have a good appetite, and a dinner to eat on the table," Charles assented unsympathetically, and set off walking at such a rate that the Englishman lagged behind, to saunter on slowly and peep into each of the lighted windows.

He suffered from love-and-a-home-sickness.

Boroviecki had meanwhile mingled with the crowd of workmen, pouring out of the side streets and into the sidewalks of Piotrovska; and borne on by the stream, he went along. It was still too early to meet Kurovski. He had no mind to enter any drinking-bar; he was driven from his lodgings by sheer boredom—and so, not knowing what to do with himself for the next few hours, he strolled along the street. Turning off at Benedict Street, he presently passed into Spacerova, which was darker and more quiet, and he walked from one end of it to the other, and then back again.

He was in fact walking with the fixed intention of tiring himself out, and silencing by means of physical fatigue those extraordinary voices—of awakened conscience, perhaps?—that were now inflicting on him pangs ever sharper and sharper, and that later became a sense, as yet dull and subconscious only, of sorrow for Emma.

Once more he reflected on that liaison of theirs, broken off

so brutally, so inhumanly—and cancelled now by her with contempt and with aversion. He was no inexperienced youth, nor a nature prone to sentiment, nor at all ready to feel for human sufferings. Nevertheless he was aware—and the knowledge brought with it a grinding pain—that he had done her grievous wrong. Moreover, he now recalled her kisses of old days, her love, her nobility of mind, and everything the remembrance of which, revived there at the Endelmans', had made his heart beat quicker; everything that was at present arousing within him such profound, overpowering agitation, so mighty and persistent a desire.

Yes, once more he yearned for her love. He could not stand it—the thought that they were separated eternally, that he should nevermore kiss her lips, nevermore see her proud head resting on his shoulder. So fearfully unstrung was he that more than once he turned his steps towards her house, and thought, with a violently palpitating heart, with what a cry she might welcome him!

But he did not go there, and continued his walk to and fro in the street. He would have had to find some justification of his conduct, and there was none whatever.

And then he burned with shame, remembering too well the oath and solemn vow of everlasting love which he had sworn to her not so very long ago.

And then there was the shame he felt at those soft unmanly emotions under the influence of which he knew he was falling now! He had gone in for reason alone, cool business common sense; and he had thus done many an evil thing with deliberate intention, and purposely fortified and armoured his heart with all the sophisms of self-interest. From the account-book of his life he had eliminated every item that bore the slightest trace of sentiment, of unreflective impulse, or of interest in anything beyond self—of anything, in a word, that might be in the way of his making such a fortune as would enable him to enjoy life tranquilly and to the full. He had speculated, but with cool reflection; made love to women, but with just as cool deliberate reckoning. And he had schooled himself so well that he sometimes

felt himself another man, a new one, and thought that the impulses, aspirations, and beliefs imbibed at home, at school, and in his own social world, had now entirely died out of him.

Great was his error! Something had fallen upon him, but nothing more tangible than the scorn of a woman he once had loved; and this alone, this less than an atom, had by the mysterious power of association brought up to light those worlds of mental life which he had been at such pains to bury underground. Now he saw with dismay that he had not quite steeped his whole soul in money-making, in factory work, and in an utterly egotistical life; and that it was as full as ever of those "illusions" that had now awaked and asserted their rights with greater insistence than ever. His first youth, rising, so to speak, from the ashes of his matter-of-fact life in Lodz, had come back to him, and he hungered now to know the feelings of the heart once more. Solitude had become irksome to him.

"And I have not a place to go to!" he thought.

He had not forgotten his promise to be with Lucy at twilight; he had broken it. Now that the melancholy remembrance of Emma had softened his heart, and after the many shocks it had undergone, Lucy was an object of remorse to him. Her vulgarity, her foolishness, chafed and irritated him; and he could not now see in her a single one of those good qualities he had found only the day before. He would certainly have declared that she was bereft of any, had he now been called to pass judgment upon her—and thus quieted in some degree both his conscience and his badly shaken nerves.

At last, tired of thinking, he betook himself to the hotel where dwelt Kurovski, whom he had not seen for several weeks.

The servant whom he met on the first floor and asked to announce him said he would ascertain whether he was up yet. Returning in a minute, he ushered Charles in.

"Is that you, Charles?" a powerful yet pleasant voice called out from the next room.

"It is.—Not asleep, surely?"

"Not quite. Please pass into the sitting-room, I'll be with you in a few minutes."

Charles walked somewhat impatiently about the beautifully furnished sitting-room, awaiting the advent of Kurovski.

Besides his lodgings at the village close by his works, Kurovski rented apartments in Lodz, "for discretion's sake," as he used to say. Every Saturday he came there, and was wont to receive a number of good acquaintances, with whom he would drink, converse, and play at cards. He would then stay in bed all Sunday, and drive off in the evening, to disappear for the whole week. For several years he had kept up this sort of life.

He had not one single friend, though on quite familiar terms—using *thee* and *thou*—with the men whom he admitted to visit him.

The man was a nondescript—one out of his sphere, who in the Promised Land of Lodz had risen instead of going under, adapting himself to the place, so far as making money and breaking with his own social set would go.

Very little was known of him. Ten years previously he had come there with the remnants of a large fortune, which he had probably squandered in making merry. He set up a factory in partnership with some business man or other of a shady type, and gave up the concern in a year's time, quite penniless. Subsequently he attempted to manage affairs by himself, but equally without success. Then he "taught himself how to work," as he described those years of hardship spent in a subordinate capacity at Bucholc's.

At length he started a small chemical factory (he had studied chemistry at one time in Germany and gone through the whole course), with the result that he did not lose at all, but got rid of his partner—formerly a landed man—who went to Warsaw to get some situation in the tramway service.

Kurovski's factory then developed at a frantic, an American, rate of growth, and such as in these parts is only possible in Lodz. But it became a success only by reason of his

energy, his wonderful perseverance, and his efficient administration and great technical proficiency. He made no bankruptcies, was not even once burnt out, cheated no one, and yet was now fast accumulating a fortune. He had resolved to do so, and this he was doing by sheer hard work and grit.

Business apart, he was an eccentric fellow. An aristocrat to the backbone, and yet a hater of the aristocracy; a conservative with a fanatical belief in progress and science; a liberal who was also a furious partisan of absolute government; a sincere Catholic, but still more sincerely a man who treated all religions with irony; a perfect sybarite, to whom labour was insupportable, and at the same time a most strenuous and indefatigable worker. He made fun of everything and of everybody, but had a most feeling heart for all misfortunes, together with a lofty, broad-minded compassion for all. And yet all these inconsistencies only formed the exterior of a very homogeneous and original personality.

Boroviecki stopped in his walk. He thought he had caught something like the sound of a female voice and the rustle of a dress in Kurovski's room; but it was heard no more, and Kurovski came in.

He seemed ill at ease, welcomed his guest and sat down looking rather fidgety.

"Is anyone coming here to-day?" he asked, raising his large hazel eyes to Boroviecki's.

"They all are coming, so far as I know. You see, we have not seen you for three weeks."

"Sorry you haven't, are you?" he rejoined carelessly, with a flickering smile.

"Sorry at least that you doubt it."

"But I don't. I should have to appoint a time for exercising that royal prerogative of mind on you."

"And you will not?"

"I cannot somehow. Apart from your being so inscrutable, you just now have the air of a husband betrayed by his wife for the first time."

"Why not say: 'the air of a man with a bad digestion'?"

Charles exclaimed, piqued by this simile, not so far from the truth.

"As you please.—But are they really coming?" he asked, looking at his watch, and casting a glance full of mischief and drollery at the curtain over his bedroom door from behind which there issued a scarcely perceptible sound.

"Max, Endelman, and Kessler will certainly be here. Max has slept to the utmost, and the other two have been frightfully bored at the Endelmans' reception to-day."

"And I was invited!—Well, well!—Were there plenty of golden calves present?"

Boroviecki smiled grimly in reply, and there was a pause.

"Is there anything the matter with you then?" Kurovski asked.

"Why have you not been in Lodz these three last weeks?" Charles asked in reply.

"Ah! why indeed?" Kurovski threw a knife into the air and caught it up with the dexterity of a juggler. "Why? This is why." He turned half round and showed his left arm in a sling.

"An accident?"

"Yes. Two inches of steel."

"When?" Charles demanded, as if in disbelief.

"A fortnight since," was the reply; and Kurovski's dark brows came together over his eyes, fierce and menacing.

It was only then that Charles noticed his hollow eyes, and the sickly pallor of his cheeks. "A woman—" he said musingly, rather than as a question.

"Not a single one do I know for whom I'd endanger a finger-nail!" was the swift reply, as Kurovski stroked restlessly his black but scanty hair, and his beard, also black, which hid his collar and part of his chest.

"Because there are none worth it! Not one!" Charles cried hotly. "Either they are mere foolish females of the species, or they are blubbering sentimental geese. I have never found amongst them one complete specimen of humanity."

"Because it was not humanity you were seeking in your

sweethearts—it was passion. In such a matter you have no right to speak, until you have given up all this babble about women not being human, until you have ceased to treat them as toys or as dainty morsels; until you no longer view them through the prism of appetite, mere appetite."

"Who amongst us, I wonder, can see young and pretty women otherwise?"

"Who indeed? Certainly not I," Kurovski returned listlessly.

"For what reason, then, do you deny me the right of judging them?"

"And for what reason do you deny me the right to contradict myself, if only in appearance?" And he laughed.

"In that case, what's the good of mere empty playing with words?"

"That's the conclusion I reached from the first, and you have been forty minutes about it."

"Good-evening," Charles said in a very bad temper, and was about to quit the room, when Kurovski hastened to prevent him.

"Don't fly out so. You're exasperated with someone else, and pass your exasperation on to me. Stay on," he continued; "I should like to have no one but you here to-day."

Boroviecki stayed on, sat down in an arm-chair and gazed with dull eyes at a score of tapers burning in great silver chandeliers. Kurovski would have neither oil nor gas nor electric light in his rooms.

"Don't say you'll see no one else to-night; I am going away directly."

"I unsay it. Of course I want to have a look at the Lodzian Hamlet the Little—that Bernard, who not only spoils what I say by imitating me, but even copies the colour of my socks! And of course I want to behold Max, that mass of flesh, and that wolf, Kessler—to say nothing of the rest of them."

"Had you no one to entertain you when ill?"

"Ah, to entertain!—Yes, I'll admit frankly you are all at times highly *entertaining*."

"That's not a bad thing to know. In all our names, let me thank you for your frankness."

"No need; it's not hard to be frank," he ejaculated, with so droll a look that their eyes met, and they smiled and were silent awhile.

Kurovski went for a moment into the adjoining room, and presently returned. Charles gave him a wistful look. He felt a great mind to speak to the man and tell him all—at least covertly. But he held his tongue. Kurovski's frigid manner and sharp sarcastic tongue simply froze him. He contained himself and kept down by force the words that were rising to his lips.

"And what about your factory?" the other asked presently.

"I refer you to my last letter. In a week's time Moritz is coming; then we shall set to work."

"Oh! I forgot to say, I saw Miss Anne in Warsaw."

"Did you? I never knew she was there at all."

"What should she tell you for? Must the whole world end —for a girl—with herself and her intended?"

"That's just where I thought it should end."

"Unless she has a lover! Why don't you set such limits for yourself, Charles?"

"A strange question from you, who are a follower of Björnstjerne Björnson's ideas! I doubt if your sweetheart would agree to that change of front!"

"A—h!" Kurovski yawned. "Now we are talking of matters quite out of my sphere."

"For to-day!"

"Perhaps for to-morrow as well," he concluded, and rang for the waiter, whom he directed to let no one come in to him that evening, and to bring the supper menu.

Charles drowsily stretched his legs out and rested his head on the back of his chair.

"Shall I tell them to bring in a bed for you?"

"Many thanks; I'm off in a minute. I do feel terribly knocked up—disgustingly dull, and with the dullness gaining upon me."

"Order your servant to give you a slap in the face:

that will brace you up finely. A drastic remedy, but apathy is the worst enemy to life that can be."

"You never answered whether you would grant us credit."

"I shall. By the by, why didn't you tell the servant, when you came, that you had come on business? I should have sent you word that I transact business only in my office. Here I only receive friends."

"Forgive me; I spoke thoughtlessly. But don't wonder at my being so taken up with my future factory; I want to see it in action as soon as may be."

"Are you hankering after money so?"

"After independence rather."

"Only people who have nothing are independent; millionaires, never. Any man who has one rouble is dependent on that one rouble."

"A paradox!"

"Think it over, and you'll see it's a truth."

"Possibly. At any rate, I'd prefer to be dependent—as Bucholc is—only on the millions I may have than on the first upstart clod-hopper I meet."

"That's another thing, and more of a practical matter. But if we take a wider view of things, we shall see that independence, in its general idea, is a pure illusion, and that the special independence of the rich is mere slavery. Knoll, for instance, Bucholc, Shaya, Müller—and all the rest of them—are the most wretched thralls in their own factories: self-acting mechanisms at the most, and nothing more! You surely know what factory life—the life of a manufacturer—is; quite as well as I do. Well, consider what an anomalous state of things we have in the world now. Man has brought many forces of nature under his yoke and discovered new forces; and behold him the slave of those very forces he has yoked! A man creates a machine; the machine in its turn makes its master work for it. And the machine will grow in power *ad infinitum;* and so, too, will the man's bondage increase.—There you are! Victory is always more costly than defeat.—Think on that!"

He ordered a bottle of wine, and drank abundantly himself.

"A pity I did not live a hundred years ago!"

"But why?"

"A hundred years ago things were all right still. There still were potent instincts and mighty passions, since there were criminals like Danton, Robespierre, and Napoleon. If there were traitors, they betrayed whole nations; if there were thieves, those thieves stole empires! What have we now? why, only pickpockets, and fellows who stab you with penknives!"

"In those days your chemicals would not have been wanted."

"I should have done something else—helped Robespierre to guillotine Danton, and Barras to guillotine Robespierre—and cudgelled the others to death and thrown them to the dogs."

"And finally?" Charles queried, eyeing him uneasily, for his eyes were closed as he talked, and he seemed a little beside himself.

"And finally?—I should have spat in the face of Madame Liberté-Égalité-Fraternité, who is all rotten gibberish—and gone to help the Great Man to cleanse the world from the rabble!"

Charles burst out laughing, and took up his hat. "Well, good-night."

"Going already? You have not been here more than an hour and a half."

"Are you so exact in counting as all that?"

"I feared you might be staying longer.—But enough of this foolery. Next Saturday I shall be expecting you and all the others."

"I hope to be with my intended at that date."

"Send someone in your place, and come yourself on Sunday. I rely on you absolutely."

Charles went down Piotrovska Street, but felt even more out of sorts and weary than he had felt before. There was still something of his former mood left in his mind, but he

had at least succeeded in ridding himself of that sombre uneasiness and of the pricks of his conscience. His introspective surveys became less frequent; the paradoxical arguments of Kurovski rang in his ears for some time yet, but he got rid of them too.

Taking a cab, he drove home, intending to go to bed at once, and to sleep there for ever and ever.

In the entrance-passage there was Matthew, playing the concertina in the long, dark corridor for several servants from the neighbouring houses, who were waltzing merrily. Charles's appearance put an end to their fun, Matthew going in with his master.

Max Baum was no longer at home; there was only the samovar, bubbling and hissing still.

Charles had his bed made and told his man to make no noise in the passage, for he was going to bed at once. But when alone in the silence of his apartment, he was seized with such an overwhelming fit of weariness that he could not tell what to do with himself. He undressed, but without going to bed; looked over some papers, but threw them down on the table with disgust. He peered into Max's room; it was dark, and the dark seemed to breathe emptiness.

Then he gazed out into the silent street, sleeping now that the holiday was over. The stillness of the whole house was infinitely depressing: every corner exhaled low spirits and cheerlessness.

No longer able to support this awful lonesomeness, he dressed again quickly. He had forgotten all his troubles about poor Emma, and his resolutions to lead a new life. He drove to Lucy's house.

CHAPTER XIII

THE afternoon of the following day found Boroviecki lively, refreshed, and tranquil. The tempest was over, and had left no trace of its passage but a smile of mockery at himself, when he recalled it. As full of brightness and joy as that Sunday which had flooded Lodz with its glorious beams, and warmed it with the gladness of returning spring, he was sallying forth to visit the Müllers. He had dressed himself up for that purpose with such extreme care that Max scowled at him, and growled: "A young lover in a play!"

But Max was in a specially cantankerous mood that morning. He had come home later than usual, risen still later (at two in the afternoon), shambled about the lodgings in his slippers, peered into every corner, and tried to dress. But everything had gone wrong with him. He had scattered his clothes and linen all over the room, kicking them to and fro in fits of pettishness, scolding Matthew, abusing the laundress for having scorched his collars, and again raging against the shoemaker, who had, he said, mended his boots badly, and left sharp pegs inside the soles, though Matthew swore by all the saints he knew that this was not the case, and that the boots were smooth as velvet within. He dashed them down on to the floor, flung the poker (which he had been using on them) under the stove, and set to undress himself at full speed.

"What are you at?"

"Going to bed!" he growled. "Devil take it! I can't put on this boot of mine, it hurts me so; that jade has scorched all my collars; it's a hell at home, and I can't bear any more. Matthew!" he roared, "should anyone come to see me, I'm not at home. Do you hear?"

"Very well, sir. And should what's her name—the girl Antka—come here?"

"Turn her out. And if you wake me, I'll twist your neck round, and put your mug in such a state that your very sweetheart won't know you. Gag the telephone, bring the samovar and all the newspapers."

"Did anything happen in your factory? What?" Charles asked.

"What? From to-morrow we are to shorten our men's working-hours by twenty-five per cent! The season is dead, nothing can be sold; our warehouse is chock-full, and all the bills of exchange are unpaid. And on the top of that, Father—instead of having long ago shortened our working-hours or sent half the workmen packing—falls a-weeping and says these poor people will have nothing to eat! Besides that, he endorses the bills of ever so many rascals.—In a year we shall be starving. Let him, if he likes it; but why should I starve as well?"

"But half of the factories are also diminishing their payments, sending workmen away, and cutting down production. I heard this at the Endelmans' yesterday; they talked about it quite a long time."

"Devil take them all! What do I care for them? Let them leave me to sleep in peace!"

He dived under the counterpane, turned his face to the wall, and puffed and snorted with rage.

"Your father must be much grieved; I am truly sorry for him."

"Don't talk about him to me; I'm in such a taking, I'd give him gratis to anybody who would have him!" he cried, sitting up in bed with a violent jerk. "The old wiseacre! He himself works like any of the men, he is himself tired out, and yet he says he will not go to Ems this year, though the doctor not only advised but ordered him to go!—All his looms will be presently at a standstill, he manages things so.—And yesterday Bertha's husband, that nice fellow, Fritz Wehr, came and got round him so that the old man forked out almost all the money he had and gave it to that

scoundrel!—Afterwards he told Mother he felt so fit that he had no need to go to Ems!—I don't know what will become of us; I have lost all hope of saving our firm. With all his honesty and forty years of work, I shall be forced, if he dies presently, to pay for the funeral myself!"

"It's too soon to talk of that; he'll hold out for a long time yet."

"But the firm cannot hold out for one year; and if the firm goes to pot, Father will never survive the blow. He'll die of it, I know him well.—But a man who wants to make hand looms compete with steam should be locked up in a madhouse!"

"Indeed, that is so whimsical a crank that it seems ridiculous."

"Ridiculous for strangers, but tragical for us. Especially just now, when all Lodz is shaken to pieces; when the very best firms are falling like lodged corn; when the whole town is rotten with bankruptcies, and no one knows to whom credit can be given and to whom not, because of the panic everywhere. What do you think? How have we been living for the last two years? Not by the sale of our blankets and counterpanes; Zuker has found means to copy those, and to sell his worthless imitations fifty per cent cheaper than we can afford to do. No; what keeps us going is our red printed calicoes: it's the red colour that he has not yet been able to imitate. This is the only sort of goods that really sells at all; but it's so dear that, should we sell all we could make, we should get ten per cent net profit.—Of this petty dealing I have enough, I say; and if you don't see our factory started pretty soon, I'll start one by myself, though without funds, and send everybody to the right-about! If I fail, I fail; but I shall have done something at any rate."

He laid himself down again, pulled the coverlet over his ears, and said no more.

"True," Charles said, "the season is a bad one; bankruptcies are the order of the day, we are all reducing our production—with the exception of three or four of the biggest firms, who have means to weather the storm.—Yes,

times are hard, but there are signs they are about to mend. The latest official news informs us that throughout all Russia the corn sown in autumn has borne the frosts splendidly, and promises an excellent harvest, unless the spring proves disappointing. If it does not, and if we have good crops for two or three years, the price of corn can hardly fall in the mean time, because the supplies—both here and abroad—have been exhausted, and because the crops have failed in India and in America. So that in autumn or thereabouts our markets will begin to look up again. And there's another reason, too, why the weaving industry will be better off. The Government has started gigantic enterprises, which must swallow up hundreds of millions and give employment to tens of thousands of men hitherto unemployed.—Do you hear what I say, Max?"

"I do. And I answer with the proverb: 'The traps are laid, but the birds are in the woods.'"

Charles made no answer, but put his hat on and went off to Müller's.

In Piotrovska Street he caught a glimpse of Kozlovski, who prowled about the town day by day. He was now, as usual, standing in the attitude of a dancer, his silk hat on the back of his head, occasionally thrust forward with the knob of his cane, and then back again. He was talking with a theatre manager, who in his grey sheepskin cap, and with his blond, pendulous moustache and aquiline nose, looked for all the world like an ataman of the Zaporogian Cossacks.

He saluted them hurriedly and drove on, paying no attention to Kozlovski's signs for the droshky to stop.

The Müllers' residence stood in the rear of the factory buildings, separated from them by a garden and fronting another street. In this there were but few houses, and it was almost out of town; but it was well kept all the same, properly paved, with good side-walks and gas-lights, for the sufficient reason that several manufacturers had their dwellings in that street. The smaller house, which had not even a first floor, was continuous on one side with the more imposing one-storeyed residence.

From a window Mada's head stood out for a moment, yellow among a multitude of flowers, and then vanished.

In the passage he met Mrs. Müller, who opened the door for him, and wanted even to take his overcoat! Extremely timid and bashful, she motioned him silently into the room. "My husband is in his office. Mada is coming directly. Please be seated," she faltered, wheeling forward an arm-chair, on which she laid a cushion of red silk.

He tried to open a conversation; but though he broached the most utter commonplaces—the weather, the coming spring, the current market prices—Mrs. Müller was not to be drawn out, and persisted in patient taciturnity.

"Ya, ya!" she would reply, smoothing down her blue apron, and raising her blue eyes, faded by cooking over kitchen fires, and moving languidly in her heavy wrinkled face.

She wore a jacket of check cotton cloth. On her head, tied down under her chin, there was a woollen kerchief. In every way she looked just like an old cook; and, as a matter of fact, she brought in with her a faint odour of soup and of fritters, which pervaded the room. She was most happy in the kitchen, with a stocking to knit, such as was just then peeping out of the pocket of her apron.

"How is your health?" he at last said, in despair.

"Good, very good," she replied in wretched Polish, looking nervously towards the door through which Mada was to come.

"And—how are Mrs. Boroviecka and the children?" she went on to add, after long consideration.

"Oh, I am a bachelor as yet."

"Ya, ya! and Wilhelm, my boy, is a bachelor too. Do you know my Wilhelm?"

"I have that pleasure. Has he left Lodz yet?"

"Ya; for Berlin," she answered with a sigh, and possibly might in time have continued the conversation, had not Mada then come in, full of such radiant satisfaction that her mother looked her over, pulled her jacket down, and withdrew.

"You see, Miss Mada, that I sometimes keep my promises," he said, handing her a long list of books, which Horn had drawn up for him, Horn being on more familiar terms with literature than himself.

"And was this very hard for you to do?" she said, putting the peculiar German stress on the last letters of her Polish words.

"No; very easy, since it was done for you."

"And this is no fib?" she demanded quaintly.

"Oh no," he said, smiling. "Do you think men always tell fibs, Miss Mada?"

"I don't know. Wilhelm always does, and I don't believe one word he says."

"But me!—you'll believe me, I hope!"

Her talk was beginning to amuse him.

"If you never tell fibs, of course I must believe you."

"I solemnly promise you I never will."

"Good.—Do you know, Aunt has sent me the other books, and I have set about reading them."

"Do they interest you so much?"

"Oh yes. There are such pretty, touching passages that Mamma and I have cried over them. And Papa began by laughing at us, but last evening I had to read to him the whole time."

"Did you come home late from the Endelmans'?"

"It was dark when I left.—I saw you go."

"I was sorry, but had to leave earlier."

"The Endelmans have a lovely house, and treated us so very grandly!"

"I very much regret I could not see more of you, Miss Mada."

"But we talked about you, Mrs. Travinska and I."

"And you both said a great deal against me, didn't you?"

"No, oh no! It's the men who say things against us."

"Are you quite sure of that?"

"Why, whenever Wilhelm comes home from a visit or an evening party, he tells me all, and makes fun of all the women."

"But do you think every man does like him?"

"Tell me they don't, you, and I'll believe you!" she cried hastily, the blood surging all over her face.

"I can assure you they don't—not all at least."

So the talk went on, until, her childish prattle beginning to tire him, he turned to look at the flowers, which were perfectly well cared for, and filled the window-sill. He spoke of them with warm praise.

"I'll tell Gotlieb what you say, he will be so pleased."

"Who's Gotlieb?"

"Our gardener.—Mr. Störch does not like flowers. He says that if potatoes were grown in every one of these flower-pots, they would be of more use. But he's silly, isn't he?"

"He certainly is, if you say so."

She grew upon him more and more; and little by little, when she took courage and was less troubled with the blushes that now mantled more seldom over her cheeks, she even came to speak out so decidedly that he felt some surprise. She was quite unacquainted with social forms; for her father was a millionaire of too recent a date, and she had been bred between the kitchen and the factory, and among people of their own standing—weavers, factory hands, and so on; but she displayed a very lively mind and a good deal of shrewdness. From her original sincerity the hypocrisies of fashionable life had yet taken nothing. She at times sounded ridiculously childish, but was pleasing by her simplicity. She had even gone through a sort of high school in Saxony, from which country Müller had come to Lodz years ago, a simple weaver; and Lodz had proved really a Promised Land for him. Also, she was not without certain inklings as to the value of money in life, as was evident from some remarks of hers about a common acquaintance.

"Do you know that Mannia Godfryd has broken off her engagement?"

"I did not know. Do you feel shocked at her?"

"Only amazed. She has neither good looks nor a marriage portion; yet this is the second time she has done this thing."

"Perhaps she prefers to wait for some rich young mill-owner."

"But her intended may make a fortune. My father, when he married, had not got one thaler; and yet, all the same, he's a wealthy man now."

"But possibly Miss Godfryd prefers being an old maid?"

"No girl would be an old maid of her own free will!" she cried with no little warmth.

"Are you quite sure?"

"I never should at least," she rejoined. "I always feel sorry for old maids. So lonely, so unhappy!"

"That shows your kind heart."

"And then, people laugh at them so!—If I could, I'd manage for all women on earth to have husbands and children!"

She stopped short, attentive to see whether Boroviecki was laughing at her. But he repressed a smile, and with a glance at her golden lashes and flushed face, merely remarked with the utmost seriousness: "That would be a very good act on your part, Miss Mada."

"You are not making fun of me?" she inquired suspiciously.

"I admire your great kindness of heart."

"Papa is coming in," she whispered, drawing a little away from him.

Müller had come in by the door that led to the big house. He was wearing slippers noisy with wooden soles, and a thickly padded jacket, much the worse for grease.

With his plump, red, shining face, with no hair on it, but plenty of fat, he was strikingly like a saloon-keeper; only, instead of the conventional porcelain pipe, he had between his teeth a cigar, which he shoved frequently from one corner of his mouth to the other with his tongue.

"Why, Mada, I didn't know Mr. Boroviecki was here," he said, after welcoming him.

"Mamma didn't want to interrupt you in your work, Father."

"You see, Mr. Boroviecki, I too have my worries," he said,

taking the cigar out of his mouth, and using the cuspidor that was by the stove.

"You are no doubt producing less at present?"

"I must: there's so much ready material, and so few sales. The season has failed entirely. There still are some buyers, but they are all going bankrupt, or look like it. I have lost a good deal by them this year. What's to be done? Wait for times to mend."

"Ah," Charles observed with a smile, "even in the very worst of seasons what have you to fear?"

"H'm. A dead loss can never be regained even through the best of seasons.—Are they not shortening the hours at Bucholc's?"

"Quite the contrary; in the department of white goods there's to be evening work into the bargain."

"Always lucky! Is his health so poor still?"

"Better, I suppose, for he tries to go about."

"But, Mada, why are you keeping the gentleman here?—We have a palace for visitors."

"Will you kindly come with me?" she faltered.

"Let's both go; I'll show you my hut."

"About which such glorious things are spoken in Lodz."

"You will see. It cost me in all one hundred and sixty thousand roubles; but then everything in it is new. I don't buy those antiquated things the Endelmans do; I can afford new articles." He drew his caftan over his rather portly stomach, and made a grimace of contempt at the old and very costly furniture of the Endelmans.

They went up a narrow staircase that led from the old dwelling-house to the upper storey of the "palace," the whole of its ground-floor being taken up by the office of the principal factory. Mada ran forward and opened the great door, the latch of which was covered with cotton cloth.

"I'm glad you've come," said Müller, puffing, and rolling his cigar constantly from one corner of his mouth to the other.

"I have long been wanting to come, but never could find time."

"I know, I know," he said, clapping him on the back.

"We are too dull here; that's why you didn't care to come," Mada remarked, as she led the way into the "palace."

"Pray sit down on this beautiful sofa," Müller entreated.

The place was all in shadows, but Mada drew the blinds up, and the crude daylight filled a suite of superbly furnished rooms.

"Would you like to smoke a good cigar?"

"I never refuse one."

"Try these strong ones—seventy-five kopeks apiece."

Turning out his greasy trousers pockets, he pulled forth a handful of cigars, crushed, crumpled, and bent out of shape.

"Or try these. Not so strong; a rouble each," he added, throwing them on to a stand, and, rolling them straight with dirty hands, he bit off the end of one, and offered it to his guest.

"Maybe you'd prefer those stronger ones."

Boroviecki, not without some aversion, accepted one.

"Fine!—what?" Müller asked, swaggering about the room with his hands in his pockets.

"They're excellent; but those you smoke have not quite that flavour."

"Mine cost five pfennigs each. I smoke a great deal, and I'm used to them," he said to excuse himself.

"Will you have a look round the rooms?"

"With pleasure. Max Baum has told me about them."

"Mr. Max is your great friend," Mada put in.

"He's a clever boy; but his father has—something wrong in the upper storey."

"Look well, my dear sir, look over everything here; you'll find no worn-out rubbish. Everything has been made to order in Berlin."

"So you got all from abroad?"

"Every stick of furniture, my dear sir. Hüberman assured me that nothing worth having was to be procured in this country."

Charles held his peace and surveyed with somewhat cur-

sory glances the sets of furniture, the heavy silken or velvet *portières*, the carpets, the pictures (or rather the picture-frames; for Müller called his attention to these alone), the candelabra, costly but in bad taste, the short thick stoves of German majolica, and the mirrors, framed in Saxony porcelain, and specially intended for a lady's room.

Mada explained every piece of furniture to him in detail. She was enjoying his presence most heartily, and often raised to his face her blue chinaware eyes, which she at once hid under the penthouse of her golden lashes; for Charles also cast frequent looks at her face, so white, yet so thickly strewn with minute freckles, scattered all over it like peach-down.

All the time he was ejaculating: "Splendid! magnificent!"

The apartments were really appointed with the utmost grandeur that a self-made man was able to conceive. Everything was there that could be purchased for mere money: life alone and taste were wanting. There was a very daintily furnished study, in which no one ever did anything; a bathroom built all of white majolica with blue patterns, and a marble bath that was to be entered down several steps carpeted with scarlet cloth, under a ceiling adorned with paintings copied from Pompeii; but it was clear enough that no one ever entered it.

Beneath a turret which, like a great dumpy bale of wool, swelled upwards from the "palace" roof there was a room fitted up in the Moorish style. That is, the windows and walls and doors were scrawled over with ridiculous many-coloured travesties of arabesques, vulgar caricatures of the Moorish style; there were long, low sofas, covered with cotton cloths, painted in the same way. The whole apartment was a mere burlesque—an outrage on good taste—with glaring hues that bespattered the windows and the walls. Not there—under that Moorish dome, glittering with brick-and-copper paintings like an old saucepan unfit for use—did anyone ever sit.

"Spanish style," Müller observed.

Mada corrected him. "Moorish style; you're mistaken, Father."

"Did you put up all this?"

"I paid; Hüberman did the upholstering."

"Do you like this room?" Mada asked.

"Very much. It is even more original than it is beautiful." He spoke thus, with a smile, and with intent to deceive.

"Dear, extremely dear! Hüberman got not less than two thousand roubles for the work. I myself don't care for gew-gaws and fal-lals; what I like is things of solid worth. But he talked me over, telling me there had to be something Chinese or Japanese in every first-class palace. And so—it was Mada's wish, not mine—he got it up in Moorish style for originality's sake; I didn't mind. 'Let it be as he pleases,' I said. 'I shall not meddle with it.' "

"Then you do not live in here?"

"If I did, Mr. Boroviecki, they would make fun of me, as they do of Meyer and of Endelman. I am cosier in my little home."

"A pity, though, to keep this quite empty."

"It is no matter. They all build palaces, so I had one built. They have grand rooms; so have I. People ought to know that Müller has a palace of his own, but prefers to live in his old lodgings."

And they went on to explore further.

In the midst of those apartments there was a long, narrow room, hung round with some dark-coloured stuff. Its window looked out upon the avenue which led to the factory. All round it there ran sofas of no great height, but with backs reaching half up the walls, and divided into separate seats, like a second-class railway coupé; the sofas were covered with red leather, embellished with golden flowers. A row of long, narrow mirrors looked gloomily down on the sofas and on the marble stands before them, with bronze rims running round each stand. This, Mada explained to him, was the smoking-room. But the immaculate freshness of the new sofas, and the stands set in such perfect order close by them, showed plainly that no one had ever smoked there.

They then went through a very large *salon*, lighted by four windows. It was perfectly white, save for a lavishly gilt

stucco ceiling; crammed with furniture, and crowded with paintings, candelabra, consoles, ottomans, and chairs, the latter standing in long lines against the walls and covered with white wrappers. There was every probability that no one had been in there yet, or had sat on any of the furniture.

Then came the dining-room, made to communicate with the kitchen by a dumb-waiter. All the furniture was in square mahogany, bordered with thin leaf-bronze; in the midst stood a massive table, and round the walls sideboards in Empire style, which Müller opened one after the other to show how they looked inside, crammed as they were with china and plate that nobody used.

A library there was also; for not even such a detail had been overlooked by the builders and upholsterers. It was a tiny room, provided with glazed bookcases in white oak, Old German style. Looking through the panes, one could see in gold lettering, on the back of every book, the names of all the great writers that ever lived; but no one there even knew their names, far less read their books.

At length they came round to the bedroom. There, in the middle, stood two enormous beds, covered with blue silk counterpanes, overcanopied with bed-curtains of the same hue; a blue carpet covered the whole of the floor, and blue hangings adorned the walls.

In a corner stood a great wash-stand for two persons. It was big enough to water a horse, and connected with the factory by means of hot-water pipes.

No one slept there.

"Oh, what a fine room to sleep in!" Charles murmured softly.

"It's for Mada, when she marries. Now let's go to Mada's room," Müller went on to say.

Mada made difficulties, protesting that it was not in proper order.

"A silly girl, that's what you are!" her father grumbled, and he took Charles to a room very full of light, and hung round with white and rosy red stuffs.

There were tiny pieces of furniture standing about pell-mell on a carpet of many colours.

"Just the place where pretty little notes should be written!" Boroviecki said, fixing his eyes on a very tiny desk, on which there stood a box of letter-paper and some writing-materials, the whole ranged in apple-pie order.

"Of what use is it to me," Mada complained, "when I have no one to write to? And yet how many a time I have been wanting to write!"

The complaint was sincere; but even as she made it, she smacked her lips at a couple of canaries in a brass cage on the window-sill that came dashing against the bars.

"Do they obey you?"

"Oh yes, and Wilhelm has come and whistled to them, and taught them to sing tunes."

"But, I say, Miss Mada! your room is just exactly like Gretchen's in Goethe's *Faust*."

She had no idea what to say to that, but blushed to the very roots of her hair.

As they left the palace, Charles once more had a look at those rooms; so many, so silent, solitary, and lifeless! They were extremely sumptuous, fresh, new, and gave the impression of an upholsterer's shop-front, magnificently fitted up, but absolutely tasteless. No one but Mada resided in that palace. It was on view for any visitors who came, and for Müller to be able to boast that he had one.

Below, in a little room close to the kitchen, where the whole family ate their meals, Mrs. Müller was pouring out the coffee. Charles said he had no time, but Müller would not hear of his going, took his hat away, and, catching hold of him, forced him into a chair. Now Mada was silently, but with eloquent eyes, begging him to stay, and so he yielded to please her; but he was forced to hurry, being obliged to see Bucholc that very day.

He asked Müller to use his influence with Shaya on behalf of Horn. This the old man readily promised to do, and to go to Shaya the very next day; moreover he guaran-

teed success, as he was on quite friendly terms with him.

Mrs. Müller offered her guest various cakes she had made herself, and several times rearranged Mada's disordered hair, that came tumbling over her forehead in golden wisps; the girl was so greatly pleased and excited that she was laughing continually and paid no heed to anything whatever. She could not even keep to herself the fact that she liked Charles exceedingly, but let him know it more than once in various ways.

Müller was pleased, too, put his arm round Charles's waist, slapped him on the knee, and talked a great deal about his factory. Charles did his best to feign an interest in it, listened patiently and made suitable replies; but he had enough of it, and was not less tired of being compelled to stay there than of the trite subjects of Müller's conversation.

Both in manners and in outlook upon the world the whole household bore the stamp of the lower middle class; but it also had the fragrance of German tidiness, and steady ox-like industry. Only in one point were the Müllers exceptional: their millions had done them no harm; they still possessed the instincts and desires of the working-classes.

"When you become our neighbour, you must come to see us oftener."

"What! are you to live near us?" Mada cried with beaming eyes.

"I am.—Do you see that long row of windows beyond Travinski's works?" he said, pointing to it.

"Why, that's Meisner's old factory."

"I have bought it."

"Oh, then you'll be quite near!" she cried jubilantly; but suddenly something made her silent and gloomy till Charles went away. But when he did, she earnestly begged him to come again.

He promised solemnly he would, and on leaving squeezed her hand with so much expression that she blushed very deeply and her eyes followed him out of sight from the window.

Boroviecki went directly to see Bucholc, but walked slowly, troubled and pondering over Müller's cordiality, and still more over Mada's. There was an agreeable picture now forming in his mind and getting more and more clearly outlined. He was sure that old Müller would not hesitate one instant to give him his daughter.

Here he almost laughed aloud at the picture of that stout red-faced German, in his cotton cloth jacket, grease-stained trousers, and old slippers, walking about those grand apartments. The man was comical, but what was that to Boroviecki?

"Mada has such natural winsomeness—and a cool million into the bargain.—What the deuce!" he muttered. "And yet——" He went on thinking and putting forward suppositions and making conjectures—but presently sent them flying at the remembrance of Anne and the letter he had received that day and not opened as yet.

"Always there is some hindrance; a man is always in bondage," he said to himself, as he walked into Bucholc's office.

His late attack once over, Bucholc had soon felt very much better. He was presently able, not only to work at his office as he had done, but also to visit the factory, aided with his stick or by a workman.

He remained on good terms with Boroviecki, although the latter had resigned his place, and they both were at odds several times a day. He had the most absolute trust in him, and felt the need of him at present, while Knoll was absent still; for the latter, when recalled on account of Bucholc's illness, had replied by wire that he should come back sooner only in case the old man died; that otherwise he could not spoil such a good business operation at any price.

Bucholc was looking over the big ledger Augustus held for him, and only just raised his eyes and nodded to Charles as he entered. Then he went on checking the various items.

Charles set silently to work, sorting the correspondence, and afterwards looked over the plans and estimates for the new machinery in the dyeing-room, which he had drawn up himself. There was no time to lose, for it would be necessary

to use the new machinery for printing the goods for next winter season.

Evening was coming on fast. Through the office windows he saw the park plunged in deepening shadows, and the bare trees began to moan in the wind; tossed about by the gusts, they looked in at the window a moment, quivered in the light, and fell back.

The work advanced with difficulty. Müller was constantly returning to his mind, and he would set aside the stiff sheets of paper with their drawings and figures, and the notes made, and fall into a reverie.

The office was still as death; only the wind was heard louder and louder in the yard, skirmishing about among the trees, striking their boughs against the walls and casements, and drumming with a dull tattoo upon the iron-plate roofs. The electric light glided quiveringly over the black bookcases, which contained, ranged in due order, those huge ledgers bearing the years they referred to on their backs in white lettering.

Bucholc raised his eyes from the ledger, and listened to the far-away sounds of some concertina, borne by the wind from the lodgings of a worker in the factory. There were nervous twitches about his mouth; his round falcon's eyes, now redder than ever, seemed to sheathe themselves with a film. He listened long, and then said in a low voice: "It's wearisome here, eh?"

"Not more than in any other office."

"I've a queer feeling. As if I should like to hear some music. Only much louder—something uproarious. And I should like to see lots of people too."

"You could get to the theatre in time. It's only nine."

Bucholc, without replying, laid his head back on his easy-chair, staring right in front of him. And presently there came over his features an expression of acute unrest and disquietude.

"How are you feeling to-day, Mr. President?" Charles asked after a pause.

"Oh, all right, all right!" he said in a muffled voice; and a bitter smile played about his livid mouth.

No, he was not all right. His heart was beating as regularly as usual, the pain in his legs had left him, he was able to move easily enough. Still, he knew he was not all right. There was within him, he felt, a peculiar numbness. He could not think. Every now and then the thread of his consciousness would break, and he would fall into a sort of dull lethargy. He was tired of work, of figures, of profits and losses; everything had become a matter of indifference to him. And deep below the watermark of consciousness, athwart that thick grey mist of lassitude, there shot quick gleams of indefinite longings, desires so instantaneously swift that, on the way to awareness, they were gone, leaving his brain in darkness, his heart plunged in despondent sorrow.

"This house—it is awfully empty," he said quietly, looking round the office—the ledger bookcases, the windows—at Augustus, who had been leaning against the door-post, but suddenly stood erect at attention, expecting orders.

He looked with a curiously interested gaze, as if he saw everything for the first time. Then he collapsed in his chair, quite powerless; he hung his head, breathing noisily; for his whole being was seized with a mighty, unaccountable spasm of agonizing terror. With his eyes he was yet clinging to the black figures on the white ledger paper, to the light reflected from the great bronze inkstand; he still clung to the sounds, growing weaker to him now, of the concertina, to the dull, far-off clatter in the streets. But his mind was helplessly gliding away from all those sense-frontiers of existence, and falling in a sombre awful silence.

Before ten Charles ended his work and handed over his papers, explaining every item in full detail.

"Good—very good," Bucholc murmured from time to time, though he had scarcely heard anything.

Nothing mattered to him any more. He felt more and more profoundly the desert of solitude into which he now was

entering; his depression, his helplessness, weighed down on him harder and harder, pressing him like a tightening ring.

"Why should I trouble about it? It is the cashier's business," he said to himself with complete unconcern.

Boroviecki was preparing to leave.

"Going already?"

"My work for to-day is over. Good-night, Mr. President."

They shook hands and he went away. Bucholc had intended to ask him to remain, but could not; he was too much ashamed of such childish weakness. He heard Boroviecki's footsteps die away; but he would have given very much to have him back.

"Augustus, let us go upstairs," he said, rising from his seat, and forthwith went out, unaided by the servant, who switched the lights off and locked the door.

Another footman in waiting in the hall went before them with a candle, and Bucholc slowly dragged himself up through his house, so vast, so silent, so empty!

So singularly empty did it seem that night, that the solitude it exhaled was a burden to him: and he went in to see his wife. But she was fast asleep, deep within her featherbed, so that only part of her face, yellow as wax, was visible on the pillow. She did not wake when he entered, but the parrot, which the candlelight had roused, hopped out of its cage, and, clawing at a curtain, exclaimed dolefully: "Kundel! Kundel!"

He retired, disappointed, and went straight to his room, calling Augustus under his breath. The man stood there, awaiting orders. Bucholc gave him none, but sat down in silence in his easy-chair close to the stove, poked the dying embers with his stick, which never left him, and brooded, with a terror such as he as yet had never experienced, over the thought that he was going to be left alone.

"Close the shutters," he said at length.

They were of iron and put up within the room; and he assured himself that they had been properly closed. Then he undressed, lay down in bed, and attempted to read; but his

eyeballs were heavy as lead, and he could not move them.

"May I go now?" Augustus whispered.

"Away with you! go!" he returned angrily. But as the man was just at the door, he called to him: "Augustus!"

He came back, and stood waiting. Bucholc then slowly asked him a number of questions about his wife and children, and with such great kindness of manner that the man shrank away to a safe distance from his stick, where he answered him in fear and trembling, being astounded at such gentleness, which he had never yet known save as a prelude to blows.

Bucholc's only desire was to keep the man in his room as long as ever he could, though it was beyond him to say right out: "Augustus, stay with me!" But this singular conversation soon wearied him, and at length, with a wave of the hand, he sent him home.

And now he was all alone, and in dismay at being all alone. A strange blind dread penetrated his soul with sharp and yet sharper throes. He listened anxiously to the sounds in the street; but the street was asleep by now, and such faint sounds as passed by could not pierce the iron shutters, thickly felted on the inside.

Suddenly he sat up, leaning on his elbow and holding his breath. He clutched his revolver, and listened for a long time. He thought he heard the tread of feet approaching nearer and sounding more distinctly through the deserted rooms. But no, there was no one about; only the ticking of a clock, heard from one of the rooms, came to him with mournful reiteration.

Then the fancy seized upon him that the heavy velvet *portière* which hung over the door was bulging out unnaturally, as if a man were hidden behind it. Presently, however, he smiled at his own delusion, and laid himself down quietly, after switching off the light.

Sleep, however, was out of the question. The hours crawled by so very slowly they seemed stretching out to infinite length. He had not felt quite easy before in his bed; and now his former nervousness and fits of terror returned and

gained strength by slow degrees, till they all converged and concentrated into one great fear—the fear of death.

He was convinced he was about to die at once—saw this as an evident fact—and the awful conviction shook and bewildered him to such an extent that he started up out of bed as if to flee his doom, shuddering all over with dread, and rang the bell violently for the servant on duty, who slept downstairs.

"Go—go and bring the doctor here instantly!" he cried, his lips blue with fright.

After a time Hamerstein came in.

"Something is wrong with me; see what it is, and what's to be done."

The doctor, who was half asleep, made a pretty careful examination of him nevertheless, but declared there was nothing amiss, so far as he could tell.

Bucholc then explained all he had gone through.

"If you can but sleep, all these symptoms will disappear."

"You're a fool!" Bucholc replied fiercely; but he took a large dose of chloral—and fell asleep almost immediately afterwards.

Meanwhile Boroviecki, tired with the extra work he had been doing, had gone to take some tea in town. Roskovski's confectionery was at that hour almost deserted, save for three people sitting under a looking-glass in the farthest room: Vysocki, David Halpern, and Meshkoski, a technical engineer employed in Baron Meyer's factory. He came and sat down with them: for two of these he knew, and he made Meshkoski's acquaintance directly.

David Halpern, leaning forward over the table, was thumping it with his skinny fists, and almost shrieking: "You, Mr. Meshkoski, have no idea of all that work in Lodz is producing, because you do not want to know; but I shall convince you at once by pointing to its results."

He took out of a pocket-book several cuttings from the Warsaw *Courier*, set them before him, and read:

" 'From the 22nd to the 28th' (listen to this!) 'there have

been exported out of Lodz: of iron wares, 1791 poods;* of spun yarn, 11,614; of cotton stuffs, 222,825; of woollen stuffs, 103,000.' Does that tell you nothing? Did all these things create themselves? Yet I am only showing you what has been made in Lodz during this one week!"

"Oh, don't bother us with your statistics.—Waiter! three portions of coffee.—Mr. Boroviecki, will you take some with us?"

"I am only going to read you a few figures," Halpern said. "Gentlemen, pray listen; this is Bible truth, perhaps truer. 'Importation as follows: Wool, 11,719 poods; spun yarn, 12,333; iron, 7,303; machines, 4,618; wheel-grease, 8,771; flour, 36,117; oats, 18,675; corn, 8,794; wood, 36,850; raw cotton, 126,682; and coal, 1,032,360 poods'!—Such figures speak for themselves. Here's a magnificent statement of facts for you! Lodz, to digest all that, must have a good stomach, and it requires some work to do that.—And yet you say that only fools do any work!"

"Only fools and cattle, whip-driven to their work," Meshkoski returned quietly, drinking his coffee.

"Lord, Lord! what babble is this of yours? What do you call a whip? where do you find it? Men must work. Tell me, what would a common boor do if he were not forced to work? Why, rot in idleness and die of starvation."

"Oh, be quiet. You wax frantic about the industry of Lodz. Well then, go on glorifying it, this wonderful little town of yours. Go on kissing the hands of everyone who would fain become a millionaire, and telling us that millionaires have got their millions for having worked more than anybody else."

"But those millions, they have them; where then could they have got them from, unless by their work?" Halpern said, swelling with anger.

"Because they are even more stupid than their workmen, and they get money out of sheer stupidity."

"I cannot possibly make out what you mean. Mr. Meshkoski, I respect you, and therefore say I quite fail to un-

* *Pood*—old Russian weight measure = 36 lb.—*Translator's Note.*

derstand your talk. I have hitherto never doubted that whoever works earns something; and if he works and is clever enough, he earns more; but if he works very much and is very clever, he earns millions," Halpern said, raising his voice.

"What is all this about?" inquired Boroviecki, who could not catch the gist of the matter.

"I," said Meshkoski, "assert that all millionaires—all men working to the fullest extent of their own powers and the muscles and strength of other men—are fools and idiots. Mr. David Halpern asserts the contrary. He tells us wonderful nonsense about the dignity of labour; in his holy of holies he set up a shrine for those beasts who rot on a bed made of money, and will have us admire them!"

"Truth," said Vysocki, who hitherto had been mute, "must be something of a mean between these two extremes."

"Go to—heaven with your truth and your mean!—One is either a brute or a man; there is no mean in nature between these, unless in the brains of some idiotic ideologist."

"Mr. Meshkoski, I shall force you to admit that a manufacturer—a man intending to make millions—does a hundred times more than his workman; and that he ought to be respected."

"Not a word to me about those fools who overwork themselves to make money. Speak to me rather of those creatures of God who work just as much as is needful in order to live. They are intelligent."

"Mr. Meshkoski, if you had the millions you talk about, you would speak otherwise."

"I respect you. But you must forgive me for saying offensive things, when you talk of what you don't know. Now, money—I have had it, and in abundance too; and I have sent it into the air—like that!" And he blew a cloud of smoke towards Halpern.

"Ask Kurovski; he has done the same," he went on to say. "For money I care as much as for yesterday's rain. You, Mr. Halpern, hold me for a fool. No; to earn one rouble I would not rise five minutes earlier than I care to rise. And

even to earn billions I would not sacrifice the pleasure of living my own life to the full. I would not give up my right to see the sun shine, to walk out in the fresh air, to breathe in freedom, and to think on subjects somewhat greater than millions, than love-intrigues, and all the rest of it!—I do not care to work, work, work, because I care to live, live, live! I am neither a beast of burden nor a machine; I am a man. Only a fool wants money so much that for its sake he would sacrifice everything: life, love, truth, philosophy—all the treasures of humanity. If he were so glutted with millions that he could spit them out—what good would they be?—He is, let us say, going to die, on a bed stuffed with the title-deeds of his possessions. Much that would help him! As much as if he were lying on the bare ground!—And suppose he was asked afterwards how he had lived, what would his answer be?—'I have worked.'—'To what end?'—'I have made millions.'—'What for?'—'Why, to have them, to be admired, to ride in my carriage and make fools think me a great man!'—And to die when life is but half spent; to die with all the dignity of work, but of work done for those millions!—Out upon such foolery!"

"You have broached an important question, on which there is much to be said," interjected Charles.

"Then say it yourselves! I'm going home.—But some other day, and at a fitting hour, Mr. Boroviecki, I'll undertake to convince you that you are all infected with that most virulent bacillus, *Work;* it pervades the whole of human society, and (in my opinion) if you do not get rid of it soon, the whole world will come to an end far sooner than geologists expect."

They walked out up the street, along the now empty sidewalk.

Vysocki, who had long been silent, began to speak, and in an impassioned discourse tried to show that the evil lay in the fact, not that all men work too much, but that some do not work at all. Meshkoski could make no reply, having taken his leave at once and gone home.

Boroviecki was staring with leaden eyes at the slumber-

ing street. Halpern noticed that look of his, and remarked: "You are contemplating this town of ours. You realize that Meshkoski is wrong. Should everybody do as he would have them do, where would all these palaces and houses and factories be? Lodz simply would not exist. At most would there be a picturesque bit of forest, where gentlemen could go boar-hunting."

"Well, but there's no harm in that, Mr. Halpern."

"For you, no. For Mr. Vysocki here, I cannot say. But as for myself, I need Lodz; I must have the factories, the great town and the big trade going on in it! What should I do in the country, with those louts of peasants?" he cried.

"Buy their milk and be a middleman," Boroviecki rejoined coolly, looking about him for a cab.

"Even amongst those middlemen there is so much competition in that line that they are all starving."

"Not all; only such as don't know how to cheat those they deal with."

"That's empty talk, empty anti-Semitic babble, and you don't believe it yourself. You know, the minnow is preyed on by the gudgeon, the gudgeon by the perch, the perch by the pike, the pike by man. And men also are preyed on by other men, by bankruptcies, diseases, sorrows; and Death in the end eats us all up. All this is quite in order; all's right with the world. It makes for progress!"

"I see you are acquainted with Talmudic philosophy," Vysocki put in.

"No. With the philosophy of contemplation. And I have been contemplating the world a pretty long time.—But you, Director, what's your opinion of Meshkoski?" he asked, holding Boroviecki by the hand in the act of leave-taking.

"He's a very good fellow. Very," was the non-committal answer.

"He's a genius! But he has in his brains millions that he will not take the trouble to bring out. Do you know, he made a great invention at Meyer's: a new method of bleaching cotton goods. Meyer makes fifty per cent by it; and what do you think Meshkoski gets? Next to nothing. For an inven-

tion worth millions they have given him a yearly pension of two thousand roubles! And he still goes to the factory and works on in the laboratory as he did before! I respect the man exceedingly; but when it comes to not wanting a fortune, and jeering at other people's money-making, that's beyond me. He's not quite right here." And he tapped his forehead significantly.

Charles wished them all good-night and was going, when Vysocki said: "I have a matter of business with you, but can transact it very briefly. Even before I had made your acquaintance, I had intended going to you, to make a request for a certain person."

"Employment wanted for him?"

"Yes. A poor man I know, who has been seeking work these two years."

"His specialty?"

"Formerly a landed man.—But his honesty's incorruptible."

"With those two qualifications only, he might seek for another couple of years with no other result."

"He's extremely poor. And with a large family, all simply starving."

"Such cases are common in Lodz."

"Perhaps you might help him. Any situation, no matter how poorly paid and how inferior, would be a godsend to my protégé.—Excuse me if I have presumed on so slight an acquaintance to make such a request, and so soon."

"That's no matter; but I really don't know what answer to give you. Of the better paid situations there are none free. Most of them require specialists; and for any vacancy occurring, there are scores of applicants."

"The place the most poorly paid would do.—And so—if you can——"

Boroviecki gave him his visiting-card. "Let your protégé come over to me with this to-morrow afternoon at my office. I have no situation free, but will do my best to make one for him. Though I cannot promise to succeed."

And with that they parted.

CHAPTER XIV

AVID HALPERN walked slowly down Piotrovska Street, pondering over Meshkoski, and looking around him on the town he loved with all the fervour of an enthusiast. He did not care to recall the fact that Lodz had robbed him of all his father's inheritance, that for many a year he had been living from hand to mouth, that again and again he had been compelled to take up a new business, that he was ever only on the road to that fortune which was perpetually slipping out of his grasp. All this he ascribed to ill luck, but nevertheless persisted in opening brokers' offices, shops, and agencies, always ending in bankruptcy, but never despondent. And thus he went on through life with equanimity, contemplating Lodz and the splendour thereof, dazzled by its greatness, hypnotized by the millions he saw rolling around him.

Though married, he was childless, working hard for his wife, whom he would send to Franzensbad yearly to drink the waters. As for himself, he had not stirred out of Lodz for this many a year. He cared little what he had to eat or to put on, or how he lodged. Having nothing himself, he rejoiced to think how much more and more Lodz had every day, and to gloat over the frenzied rush, the swift turnover, the roar of machinery at work, the thundering hubbub in the streets, the warehouses crammed full of wares, the new streets, the millionaires, their mills and works—all, in short, that made up the colossal Thing, now sleeping under the calm black sky, in which the moon was floating.

He loved Lodz, just as he loved its mill-owners, and its workmen, and even those simple peasants who streamed to

the town every spring: their increasing numbers told him that once again there would be more movement in Lodz, more factories, more houses.

He loved Lodz!

Did he care, he, if Lodz were ill lighted, dirty, ill paved, ill built? if houses yearly fell in ruins upon the dwellers' heads? or if in bystreets men were stabbed with knives in broad daylight?

On such trifles he never spent a thought. Neither did he think how thousands were starving there, thousands living in dire penury, thousands struggling with all their might to earn the most miserable livelihood—a struggle silent, but terrible, because never-ceasing and without any hope of victory: a struggle that carried off more worn-out victims every year than the most frightful epidemic would have done.

"All that makes for evolution, for progress!" he would say, glossing over these evils in his joy that the town had grown with such marvellous rapidity, and feeding his admiration with the enormous statistics of import and export, and with the total turnover, increasing every year by tens of millions.

Upon all the newly hatched millionaires he looked with pride, and honoured them from the very depths of his soul; it was with unfeigned rapture that he gazed from the pavement upon their magnificent equipages and residences; and he proclaimed throughout the town the sums which the little "cotton" and "half-wool kings" had lavished on the decoration of their mansions and dwelling-houses.

Such was that David Halpern who now walked down Central Street towards his lodgings, ruminating on Meshkoski. To him, a money-adorer, Meshkoski was essentially beyond all comprehension. How could anyone help taking money when it flowed by itself into his pocket? That was not in the power of his mind to grasp.

Full of these thoughts, he quietly opened a door on the third floor of a large house; but before going in, his ear had caught the faint sounds of music, which came to him wafted from the end of a dark corridor.

His wife was asleep in bed, but he had a mind to eat something; so he rummaged in a cupboard, and having found nothing but a bit of sugar, went into the kitchen to make himself a cup of tea. The samovar was cold, but he poured some tea into his cup, bit at his sugar, and drank it, pacing his tiny ante-room the while, both not to wake his wife, and to hear the music that came floating through the door.

After a time he grew tired of walking thus; so, cup in hand, he went down the passage and knocked gently at the door.

"Come in!" said a voice from the room.

He entered at his ease, made a friendly bow to the musicians, and sat down by the stove to sip his tea and listen to the music with rapt devotion.

Horn was playing the flute, Malinovski the violoncello, Shulc the clarinet, and Blumenfeld, who led the whole quintette, the first violin, while the second-violin part was taken by Vilchek. Joe Yaskulski, who sat in the next room, was busy copying a letter. All of them, except Horn, had been schoolfellows, and they met twice a week to play together.

By means of this music they unconsciously avoided the torpor induced by their grinding daily toil, for all were employed either as technicians or as office clerks. Horn, as the best off of them all (having come to Lodz only to learn business, his father being a wealthy man), had assembled them at his lodgings and bought them the instruments. But the soul of these musical festivities was young Blumenfeld, a musician both by talent and by training, for he had graduated from the Conservatory of Music. As, however, there was no living in Lodz on music alone, he had provisionally taken up work at Grosglik's bank as an accountant.

Joe Yaskulski was the youngest of them. He was not musical, but very intimate with them all, and came frequently. He was passionately fond of hearing the love-stories they told; for he dreamed of love with all the exuberance of a stripling of eighteen who had been very strictly brought up. Whilst they played, he was copying a love-letter Malinovski had given to him to read, the latter, a very good-looking young fellow, receiving a great many of the sort. It was

indeed badly spelt, but showed so much feeling that it made him flush very red every now and then and peruse the crabbed scrawl with dimmed eyes. He drank in deeply those wild outbursts of emotion, and at the same time experienced a wish, strong even to bitterness, that someone might some day love him so—or rather that he might some day get such a letter.

The music ended at last; the charwoman had brought in the samovar. Horn aided her in arranging the table, and got the glasses himself.

"Vilchek," Blumenfeld said severely, "you took C instead of D, and afterwards played an octave too low. You took a false note three times besides."

"It's no matter," Vilchek said breezily; "I soon came right again." And he walked about the room, rubbing his hands, and taking out a heavily scented handkerchief to wipe his fat round face, that was overgrown with a scanty down, of a colour as yet indistinguishable.

"Why," Horn observed, "you smell like a perfumer's shop."

"I am selling scents on commission," he said to excuse himself.

"What is it you don't trade in?" Shulc said, laughing, who, in spite of his tubby shape, was very lithe and nimble, and now poured out the tea for them all.

"Not in your blubber, Shulc, at least."

"A poor joke!" Blumenfeld muttered, sitting down to table, and brushing back his hair with a thin, nervous hand. It was very fair, and, like an aureole, surrounded his lofty and strikingly handsome forehead and his face, stamped with suffering and wearing a bitter smile.

"Mr. Halpern, won't you sit down with us?" Horn said.

"All right; I shall have warm tea to drink.—You play that piece better and better; it's so like the voice of someone weeping, weeping very mournfully—and it made me so nervous I could hardly remain in my place. A beautiful concert!"

Horn cried out: "Joseph, tea is here for you."

Joe came in, still flushed with emotion, and sat down at the end of the table to conceal what he felt after he had read the letter.

He drank his tea silently and in haste, thinking over the wonderful letter and looking now and then at Malinovski with astonishment—Malinovski, who sat taking his tea so calmly.

"Take some vodka, Vilchek, and don't look at your watch; where are you going in such a hurry? Are you on duty?" For Vilchek was at work in a railway warehouse.

"No, I have given up office work for good."

They all exclaimed together: "What! have you won in a lottery?" "Are you engaged to Miss Mendelsohn?" "Or making a bolt to America with all the railway money?"

"No, no, no! I have something better than that; a wonderfully good thing, one that will set me at once on all fours."

"On all fours?—A quadruped then—as you always have been!" said Malinovski, with a look of dislike and aversion in his green eyes.

"But never a madman, never an inventor of unrealizable things!" Vilchek replied.

"You are an ignoramus, or at most know how to cheat those you deal with. A common huckster, that's what you are! Learn this: the madness of a genius has done more for the world than all the practical cunning of fools like you; for you only know how to buy things cheap and sell them dear. Do you hear that, Vilchek?"

"I do, and shall remember it when you ask me again for credit."

"By the by," Malinovski went on, with a sudden return to serenity, "get me twenty more pounds of copper wire—same quality as last time."

Vilchek, angry as he was, took down the order in his note-book.

"Damn your quarrels and business orders!" someone growled.

"One does not prevent the other," Vilchek observed, pacing the room, rubbing his hands together vigorously, licking

his big, protruding lips, and smoothing down his rumpled hair, tumbling like a mane over his low and disagreeably puckered forehead.

"Now," said Malinovski, raising his voice, "listen, all of you; I have an important proposal to make. Joe Yaskulski is in need of a hundred roubles by to-morrow evening, and asks us all to lend them to him. He will pay it back by monthly instalments of ten roubles. The money is absolutely necessary to him. I beg you, for good-fellowship's sake, to lend it; I myself will vouch for the whole sum."

"Giving a lien on the invention you are about to make, eh?"

"Vilchek!" Malinovski shouted, stung to the quick, and striking the table. Mastering himself, he continued: "Let's make a collection for the loan"; and he laid five roubles, all he had by him, on the table. Shulc followed suit with another five; Blumenfeld gave ten.

"And I," Horn said, "will make up all that may be wanting. I have nothing to-day, but can borrow the money by to-morrow."

"Come, Vilchek! put down twenty."

"On my word of honour, I have not got so much as three by me. But Horn will give five roubles to me, and I'll return them to him."

"Clever!" someone snapped.

"Don't rely on him!—Horn, you will then lend eighty; we have twenty here. But without fail before six P. M. to-morrow."

"Without fail. Joseph, you'll come here for the money."

With tears in his eyes Joe thanked them all—all but Vilchek, who smiled superciliously and walked still faster about the room. He had the money, but never lent any.

"What do you want it for?" he asked Joe, who replied:

"Since you lend nothing, what does it matter to you?"

"My best compliments to your mother!"

Joe made no reply. He felt very sore, for he remembered well how much that very fellow was in his family's debt for services rendered. He was in a hurry to get home; he wanted

the money for his mother. A baker had offered her the management of a shop, provided she deposited a hundred roubles with him as security. That would ensure the whole family against starvation; they would have lodgings gratis, and a fixed percentage on all sales. So he hastened away to tell her, but stopped on the landing to whisper Malinovski: "Adam, let me keep that letter for a day or two; I'll take good care of it."

"Oh, you may keep it for good; I've no use for it."

Joe embraced him and rushed away.

The room was in silence for a time. Blumenfeld was tuning his violin, Horn drinking tea; Shulc looking at Malinovski, who—with the usual set smile on his face—was deeply poring over some algebraical formulæ, which he had pencilled on his napkin; while Vilchek, still striding about the room, thought upon next day's business, which was, as he expressed it, to set him "on all fours," but occasionally bestowing on his companions a listless, ironical glance, which had in it a certain pity, unmingled with any respect. At times he would sit down, breathing hard, and take off his shoes; they were fashionable articles of patent leather, but so tight that they squeezed his feet sorely. He was dressed in all the flashy exaggerated elegance of a counter-jumper.

At last he addressed Shulc, after pulling on his boot to pace the room again. "Do you know, I have happened upon a secet of Kessler junior's."

"You have a special talent for ferreting out things of that sort."

"Because I've a good sight."

"It pays—a good sight does—now and then."

"Malinovski!" Vilchek screamed, but sat down again, his boots pinching him very badly.

"Oh, pray," Adam said sarcastically, "let us go on hearing you talk of your penetration and ingenuity. We shall be attentive, and your boots a little easier to wear."

"Well, yesterday, in East Street, I met a very handsome girl; so I followed, to get a better look at her, for I somehow seemed to know her face. She went into a house in Dzielna

Street, and disappeared in the yard. It was disappointing, and I was seeking the janitor to get some information, when whom did I see but young Kessler, coming in at the main entrance-passage? That looked shady; everybody knows how very fond of girls young Kessler is. I waited outside the house, and about a quarter of an hour afterwards I saw him come out, but not alone: with that girl! But she was dressed so grandly!—I hardly knew her again. They got into a carriage that was waiting a few doors away—and went off in the direction of the railway. You, Malinovski, are acquainted with her, I think?"

"How do you make that out?" he replied with apparent calm.

"Because I saw you out with her last Sunday. You were leaving one of Kessler's workmen's tenements, arm-in-arm with her."

"It's false! it cannot be—" he shouted, checking himself on the point of uttering a name.

"I am sure it is true. A brunette, as lively and as pretty as can possibly be."

"Well, enough of this; it does not interest me," he said carelessly, feeling all the while as if in the grip of a torturing hand that racked his inwards.

He was sure from the one detail given that this girl was his sister Sophy! No, he could not believe it, and sat petrified, longing to go out. Yet he never moved; never so much as raised his eyes to the men about him, fearing they might betray his secret. No sooner had he regained his self-possession than he put on his overcoat and withdrew without waiting for the others.

The great barrack-like buildings, in which several hundreds of people were crowded together, now dark and in silence, showed only a gleam of light from one window. Everybody slept; even the corridors that Malinovski threaded were black and empty. But his steps echoed through the house.

His mother was at home with his youngest brother, who was sitting in the kitchen, wrapped up in a shawl, stopping

his ears, and getting next day's lesson by heart with a backward and forward swing, and in a monotonous voice.

"Is it long since Father has left for the factory?" he asked, looking into the other room to see whether Sophy was there.

His mother did not answer; she was kneeling before Our Lady of Chenstohova's image. It stood on a chest of drawers, lit by a dark-red lamp. She was saying her prayers half aloud, and between her fingers the beads of a large rosary glided swiftly by.

"Where is Sophy?" He put this question in a voice that trembled with impatience.

"'. . . and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. . . . Amen.' Father went out long ago. It was yesterday Sophy went to spend a day or so at her aunt Alexandra's."

After this interruption, she went on with her beads.

Adam hesitated. He wanted to tell his mother what he suspected, but felt loath to do so, she was so absorbed in her devotions. It pained him to trouble the peace that reigned in that quiet, dusky dwelling.

For a time he sat with his eyes fixed on his mother's tired old face, and her hoary hair, red in the glow of the lamplight, and the two vases of hyacinths in bloom, placed on each side of the sacred image, and filling the room with their strong sweet smell.

"*Rivus*, the stream—*terra*, the earth—*mensa*, the table—*nauta*, the sailor—" his brother was mumbling again and again with dull persistency, swinging his legs all the time.

"But—has Sophy really gone to visit her aunt?" he asked in a whisper.

"Didn't I tell you?—There must be some hot tea still. But if you like, I can make you some fresh tea; Joey brought water from the factory well but now. What do you say?"

Without a word Malinovski strode out, paying no attention to his mother, who called him back, and went round to Kessler's factory, where his father was mechanician in charge of the big motor.

The night porter let him in without difficulty, and he entered the great gloomy courtyard, surrounded on three sides

by vast buildings, where hundreds of windows shone bright, and whence came the continual dull whirr of the machines at work. For a month, the weaving and spinning departments had been doing double time, because of the temporary accumulation of orders.

On the fourth side, and closing the great quadrangle, there stood a tall chimney and a high turret-like building, through whose faintly lighted windows loomed the driving-wheels running at full speed. He passed the lower pavilions, at the time inactive, where there were the dyeing-room for woollen yarn, and the soap department; the fatty matters extracted from the wool, when washing, produced a sort of lye and soft soap. He walked by the big furnace, from whose red-hot mouth long streaks of light played upon the heaps of coal all round. Thence he proceeded to the tower.

Several half-naked men, black with coal grime, were sedulously bringing the coal in small trucks, while others were flinging it into the furnace. In the dim light he at first could perceive nothing but the big driving-wheel, which like some monstrous reptile, turning and whirling round and round with vertiginous velocity, and throwing forth flashes of steel, came soaring up out of the floor in which it was half buried, rushing up impetuously as if it would fly through the walls that confined it, and escape; then it disappeared again in the floor with a hiss of rage, to come up once more; running ceaselessly and at such high speed that it was impossible to discern its outlines—only a quivering mist of gleams thrown off by its polished steel surface, and forming a silvery aureole that followed the wheel and filled the dark tower with tens of thousands of bright scintillations. The trembling flame of many an oil-lamp fixed to the walls shone upon the pistons, which, like arms of steel as big as trees, were also moving, but to and fro, with a uniform and sibilant noise, and seemed trying in their impotent rage to catch at the wheel that, just as they were about to seize it, everlastingly glided out of their reach.

Malinovski saw his father moving about, an oil-can in his hand, close to the brazen barriers fixed all around the

machines, and from time to time ascertaining by means of a manometer the amount of power generated. He caught sight of his son, but first went around the motor, which he wiped in certain places; then, having ascertained how it worked, came round to him, put tobacco in his pipe, lit it, and looked inquiringly at his son.

"I have come to tell you, Father, I have reason to think that Sophy has become young Kessler's mistress."

"You fool!—Have you seen anything?"

Malinovski then related what he had heard from Vilchek. Whispering was not necessary; in that din and roar, even the sound of a cannon would not have carried far.

The old man listened attentively. His grey eyes, like the steel glints of the driving-wheel, began to glitter and to quiver ominously.

"Find out everything—everything!" he said, bending towards him his hard-bitten greyish face, clean-cut as if chiselled in stone.

"I shall.—But if it is true, we must see to his never seducing a factory girl any more! Make that impossible," he added meaningly, and from his eyes of sea-green hue there shot forth a flash of implacable hatred, and those gentle, kindly lips of his turned livid and parted, to show white fangs like a wolf's.

"The bitch!" his father hissed between his clenched teeth, as he stopped his pipe with his finger.

"What do you think of it, Father?—I have not told Mother yet."

"I will tell her myself.—Do you make sure of the fact—and I will settle with Kessler."

He again went to the big motor, and returned after a while.

"Why have you not been to see me all this week?" he asked, in tones so gentle that his great love for his son was clear.

"I was at work at the machine I am making."

The old man gave him a look from under his brows, but made no remark, though from the bottom of his soul he

detested that machine, at which Adam had been working for a year, grudging neither time nor expense.

"It is late, Adam; go to bed now. It's well you told me.—Make quite sure, and then speak to me. If things are as you suppose—then—I shall deal with Kessler *by myself*. He has millions, but I will get even with him."

He spoke coolly, with relentless calm. He was as cool as when, in the Transbaikal country, he had once made a bet to kill a Siberian bear with his ax.

They shook hands, their eyes gleaming as they met. The old man once more set to work at the motor, oiling it, cleaning it, and consulting the manometer; but sometimes he would lean back against the wall, and with his eyes on that whirlpool of flashes and shadows, that madly rotating wheel with its convulsive sibilations, he would murmur: "My Sophy!"

Adam went home, his mind somewhat relieved. As Horn was sleeping, he closed the door, and proceeded to take to pieces that machine which was sapping his life, which he had for a year worked upon without success.

It was to be a dynamo-electric motor, so easy to construct and at the same time so cheap that it would revolutionize the world—if it could but be made to work! if his calculations were not continually at fault, if there were not always something turning up to prevent success! He was evermore going to win the victory; every day he was sure of triumphing the next; but those next days lengthened out into long months, and the victory was not yet won.

He sat at work so long that Horn, waking up at early dawn, saw the light still burning, and cried: "Adam, to bed!"

"Presently," he muttered; and he then put the light out and lay down.

The grey dawn was looking in at the window, and pouring an eerie glimmer into the room—a light in which men and things looked ghostly, and the world a place of desolation. Adam looked through the casement at the fading stars, disappearing one by one in the brightness that was invading

the world. He could not sleep. Several times he rose to go over his calculations, or to peer out of the window, cooling his head in the morning air, and gliding away in thought over the thousand roofs, blackly lustrous, scarce visible in the feeble light. The town was sleeping in the absolute depth of silence.

CHAPTER XV

HORN had gone out early to speak with Boroviecki, who had nothing new to tell him; but as he went out, he met Yaskulski going to see Charles, in consequence of the latter's conversation with Vysocki the day before. To-day Yaskulski was more agitated, more unfit for anything, than ever.

Occasionally he would draw himself up, twirl his moustache, clear his throat—but all this was inadequate to screw up his courage. He had sat down in a small room close to the dyeing department, from which he was more than once tempted to escape. But the thought of his wife and children, the remembrance of the many, many times he had fruitlessly waited in manufacturers' offices and antechambers, made him keep his seat in silent resignation.

"Are you Mr. Yaskulski?" Charles demanded.

"Yes, Mr. Director. I have the honour to introduce myself. I am Yaskulski." He spoke slowly, as he went over that set phrase, already repeated so often.

"Honour is not to the point here. Mr. Vysocki tells me you want work."

"I do," he replied curtly, crumpling his much-worn hat in his hands, and awaiting with dread the announcement that no job was to be had.

"What are you able to do? Where did you work?"

"At home."

"Had you any business?"

"I was a landed man. My land is lost; and now, in need for the time being—only for the time being—" he reiterated with a blush, "for there is a lawsuit which cannot but be

decided in our favour. The case is clear as day: after my cousin died childless——"

"I have no time for matters of family descent. You were a landowner: that means you do not know how to do anything. I wish to be of use to you; and since there has been a situation vacant in our warehouses for several days, if you are willing to accept it——"

"With thanks, Mr. Director. And most gratefully; for indeed we are just now in somewhat embarrassed circumstances. I shall never be sufficiently obliged to you, Mr. Director.—May I know what this situation is?"

"Care-taker of a warehouse. Twenty roubles a month. Duties during factory hours."

"Good afternoon!" Yaskulski answered laconically, and turned to go.

"What's the matter with you?" Boroviecki said in amazement.

"I am of the nobility; your proposal is insulting. Yaskulski may die of starvation, but cannot be a care-taker in the house of a German!" he said haughtily.

"Then die like a dog with your nobility. And be quick about it, to make more room in the world," Boroviecki cried, leaving the room in a temper.

Yaskulski walked out in a state of great excitement, and went into the street. For a short time he strode proudly, with head erect, hot cheeks, and a breast full of outraged dignity. But once in the open air and under the vault of heaven, jostled by the men hurrying by, menaced by the wheels of innumerable ware-laden trucks, he soon fell back with a sigh into his former dejection; unconsciously resuming his usual stoop, he stood still upon the pavement, and sought for his handkerchief in his torn pocket. He went to lean against a fence, staring weakly and vacantly at the sea of houses and the forest of chimneys in front of him, these vomiting black smoke in voluminous clouds; at the factories, tumultuous with the roar of accelerated work seething all around; on that unceasing human energy which he saw in action and mightily creative, and which here had

found its home. And then he stared up at the quiet azure through which the sun was rolling on. He again sought for his handkerchief, but could not find his pocket; he felt his heart throbbing with the pangs of that most horrible of sufferings—the sense of utter helplessness.

An insane impulse came over him. He wanted to fling himself down by that fence, crouch there, lay his head down on the stones—and die! "Let it come to an end at last," he thought, "this horrible struggle for life!" Let him never go back to his starving family, and let him not feel any more how absolutely incapable he was!

He no longer fumbled for that handkerchief, but put his tattered sleeve before his face, and wept.

Boroviecki had gone back to the laboratory, and was telling Murray, whom he found sitting at the table, about Yaskulski's behaviour.

"I never in all my life met such a man! I offered him such work as would keep body and soul together, and he replied indignantly: 'I am a nobleman; I'd rather die than become care-taker to a German!' Truly, all such nobles would be better dead, and as soon as possible." Here he ejaculated: "But what is the matter with you?" For Murray, instead of listening, stared with a dull, woeful expression out of the window.

"I am as usual," he returned sulkily.

"But you look so dismal!"

"I have no special reason to be merry.—By the by, would you care to buy any furniture of mine?" he continued quickly, averting his eyes.

"Furniture? are you selling any?"

"Yes, I am. I want to get rid of that rubbish. I'll sell it cheap; will you buy?"

"We may speak of that later, but if you are in need of funds, I might give you some good advice. But do be quite frank with me."

"No, I am not in need of money; but as to the furniture, I have now no use for it."

Charles looked keenly at him, and after a rather long

pause said, in tones full of sympathy: "So your engagement has come to nothing once more!"

"To nothing—nothing!" And he walked about the room, the less to betray his agitation.

His face was twitching, however. At times he paused to draw a deep breath, to gaze with dull eyes at Boroviecki's impassive face, to pull his coat down his hunched back, or to wipe his moist hands; then he would set off once more with great strides around the table.

Charles remained silent and absorbed in his work. But when Murray at last went out into the so-called "kitchen," he threw him a scornful glance, muttering: "A sentimental ape!"

"I but yesterday found out," Murray said, returning and pacing the room as before, "that marriage is the most immoral of all institutions. Yes! and it's a cesspool of filthy lies and meannesses and the vilest hypocrisy and deceit.—Don't tell me it is not!" he cried in a fury.

"I say nothing about it; it is no concern of mine."

"But that's what it is, and I say it!—Last night I was taking tea at a house where that ideal pair, the Kachynskis, were too. They were all the time sitting together side by side and hand in hand.—A disgusting habit, to be always pawing one another so!—They were continually whispering and gloating over each other with such greedy eyes, it was ridiculously indecent. They upset me for the whole evening. I could not believe they were what they seemed, and felt they must both be miserable humbugs.—And presently I was sure of it. After tea, I went into the next room and sat down by the window for a breath of cool air. The Kachynskis came in then and did not see me, and they began quarrelling together quite vulgarly! What it was all about I don't know, but I heard that ideal, divine, almost saintly Mrs. Kachynska blackguarding her husband in the language of the lowest street-girl; and she wound up with a slap on his face. And then he—that pattern of husbands!—caught her hand in his left, struck her three times with his right hand, and flung her against the stove, so that she rolled on the floor.

She did not faint, but went into hysterics, and had the whole household in at once. And they saw him kneeling by her, kissing her hands, calling her by the sweetest names, and weeping nearly in despair to see her suffer! Ugh! the vile sickening farce it was!"

"That's surely a very exceptional fact; but even so, it's amazing."

"It's not an exception. Nine-tenths of married couples live that way. And it must be so, while they are united for mercenary ends, so long as the law chains them in indissoluble bonds, so long as girls turn marriage into a commercial enterprise, and take a husband for the sake of lucre!"

"But your aversion to marriage has arisen out of your own personal disappointment, has it not?"

"No. I have long felt as I do—long seen through it all."

"Why don't you marry?" Charles asked him point-blank.

Murray, taken aback, did not reply at once, but rested his hot brow on the cold iron plates of the printing-machine that stood by.

"Because," he said at length, "my back is too crooked and my purse too light. Had I been blind, deaf, and cancer-eaten, but with money-bags—like Bucholc, let us say—every girl would then have been ready to promise me everlasting love—swear it on her knees! And till death," he added, with a wicked intake of his breath.

"Then," said Boroviecki, "she has refused you?"

"Yes, and she's the incarnation of stupidity, deceit, caprice, and loathsome perversity!"

"And all this rich collection of epithets is synonymous with refusal!" Boroviecki added satirically.

"Your remarks are superfluous!" Murray stormed, laying bare his thin-strewn teeth.

"So are your confidential disclosures!" Charles retorted.

At that moment a workman said, peeping into the laboratory: "The President wants you, sir."

Charles went round to Bucholc.

Murray somewhat regretted his outbreak of ill humour, of which he was ashamed; but the bitterness of his disappointment had flooded him with a sort of dull hatred for the whole world, and for women in particular. So, as he happened to hear some loud conversation and laughter in the department of dry colours, where a good many women were busy grinding them up, it was on them that he discharged his resentment, striking one and discharging the others directly. After which execution he wandered about, seeking every opportunity to make a row, and fine or expel some workman.

Bucholc was seated in the printing-chamber. When they had shaken hands, he said: "Knoll is coming on Saturday. Come upstairs to me here this evening."

"All right. But why should you leave your house, Mr. President? It may not be good for you to go out."

"I can't bear being at home: everything is so wearisome there. I need movement."

"Then why not go out somewhere for a drive?"

"I have done so to-day, and the drive was more tiresome still. What news?"

"Everything as usual."

"Good. But why is the factory so quiet to-day?" he said, listening in bewilderment.

"Why, there's as much noise as ever," Charles said, and passed to another chamber.

For a while Bucholc tried to catch the deafening, never-changing racket of the engines, spreading itself out in one vast murmur. He heard but little, however. He could not concentrate his attention, and felt the printing-chamber growing hot and close. He therefore left the factory, and sat down outside, on the brink of a pond fed by the water condensed from used-up steam. He let his half-closed eyes follow the contours of his many factories, scattered all round the big yard; the dark-hued files of wagons, laden with wool or stuffs, which were entering the yard; the warehouses, their shining roofs, the chimneys and the volumes of smoke they poured forth, rosy in the rays of the sun; and the tiny dis-

tant figures of the men at work, going to the storehouses or propelling the wagons.

Yet he could not well breathe in that air, full of sunbeams, but heavy with dust and smoke. A fit of coughing seized him, but go home he would not, for he now felt a pleasant kind of torpor steal over him.

The sun was shining then as brightly as it ever shines in the spring; a gentle wind blew from the shimmering water-drenched fields; and upon the tall leafless poplars that stood close outside the factory railings on one side, there was a troop of sparrows, clamorous, pugnacious, chirruping with joy at the coming of the spring. And Spring showed her beaming countenance far aloft and above, behind those great snowy clouds, like masses of the whitest wool, lying serene upon their background of blue, stretched out over the smoky town, the clatter of the factories, mills, and works, and the stillness of empty streets. And continually the factories played on, to the changeless tune of work.

At last Bucholc got up and went home. But he had such a sense of weakness in the presence of those enormous buildings, and the mighty machinery, and the forces of that titanic factory life, that he could scarce drag himself along, and looked round when he had reached his park with a sort of feeble jealousy of those red buildings, so strong, and glittering all over with bright windows!

His health, notwithstanding Hamerstein's wonder-working homœopathy, was not returning. No, he knew he was only getting worse; he slept but little at night, and that sometimes in his arm-chair, afraid as he was to go to bed. More and more did the thought come over him that if he lay down he should die; and the fear of death clutched and hugged and crushed him with dumb agony, and ever he dreaded night and solitude more intensely. Yet he would not confess the fact, not even to himself, but struggled against the thought with all the might of his now enfeebled will. A dull, leaden numbness now penetrated all his being. He refused to take interest in anything whatsoever, because he felt none; all things had become a weariness of the flesh to

him. At times he would sit for hours motionless in his office, leaving Boroviecki to manage everything. His gaze, bereft of expression, seemed to note only the waving of the boughs, as they swayed outside the casement; but he had forgotten where he was and what he was looking at. And again he would rouse up, and come back again to full awareness, crawl down to the factory, and come in contact with the men. He hankered after movement around him, and people, and the life to which he instinctively clung with the despair of a drowning man, catching vainly at a steep and slippery water-brink.

On Saturday—the day announced for Knoll's arrival—he felt worse than usual, but, for all that, visited the factory at noon. He was consumed with fever, and with such irresistible restlessness that he could not stay in the same place a minute; walked from pavilion to pavilion, from department to department, from storey to storey; felt himself impelled to go on—on—on! to see everything—and to get away from everything likewise. For indeed the machinery was a strain on his nerves, and the numberless transmission bands and belts, gliding along with their droning, moaning noise, were dreary and irksome to his ear.

He went then to the weaving department, and amongst the looms, with their fitful angry whirring, growling harshly like wild beasts that struggled to break loose from their chains. But the immense chambers were filled with such a clamour of looms, such a jangling, snarling, hurtling uproar, that he walked hurriedly through the room, his red and blinking lids eyeing the workmen all bent over their looms, not daring to look up, and as deaf as they were blind to all things round them. About the black quivering contours of the machines, and the workmen's all but motionless shapes, the cotton dust hovered like a tremulous greyish haze; and in the long streaks made by the sun that beamed in through the windows, it sparkled with myriads of motes.

No. It was not well for him in that place. The continual stridulous voice of the iron, working under compulsion, the overwhelming greatness of those forces with which all the

rooms were flooded as they rushed through, making the walls tremble with their rebellious clamour against the violence done to them, jarred on him strongly.

He went out and through the lower pavilions, making for the calendering department. But here again the effluvia from the soda, from the starch in solution, from the lye and the soft soap, made his eyes smart; and the monstrous jaws of those machines, vomiting endless ribbons and sheets of many-coloured stuffs, oppressed him with something like nausea.

Going farther, he looked out from one of the corridors into the yard. There stood the wagons full of cotton bales which they were bringing in to a warehouse; from other warehouses other wagons were being loaded with goods ready for sale; while just opposite the window a steam trolley was panting away, with a string of empty coal-wagons after it. He watched it disappear behind the factory, round by the forest; and then he gazed on the dark clouds of black dust in which the workmen's shapes were plunged, as they shovelled the coal from the wagons, piling it up into square stacks.

"What is all this to me?" he asked himself wearily, leaning over the window-sill to rest himself, feeling weighed down, unable to move, and very short of breath. Time and again everything went whirling round, and there was a great buzzing in his ears. This roused him to consciousness; his strength returned, and he stepped more quickly, because terror had seized him.

He felt reassured only at the sight of his people packing the goods. It was done in a large chamber, where a good many women were at work. Its centre, to the very ceiling, was piled up with rolls of printed cotton goods of various colours and patterns.

All round there arose a merry sound of talk and laughter; but no sooner had Bucholc appeared than it died away into almost complete silence. Every voice was hushed; the laughter fell dead; every eye glowed darkly; every face scowled with an uneasy scowl. Now there was only to be heard the

creaking of the machinery measuring out the lengths of the stuffs, and winding them over flat boards, or the dull thud of each separate piece as it fell into the wagons, which carried them off with a clatter to the neighbouring warehouses, and the sharp ripping sound of the paper cut to make the packages.

Bucholc passed slowly round the tables, looking steadily at the rows of plain, pallid, bloodless faces, ruined by constant grinding work. No one looked up at him; he saw only glances shot from under bent brows, that told either of enmity or of fear.

"Why are they afraid of me?" he said, and as he went out, listened a moment—and heard the room now as noisy again and as lively as before.

He walked now more slowly, with such difficulty that he decided he must return to his house; so he passed by the bleaching department, and took a short cut out through the warehouse where the ready goods were stored.

This was a one-storey building, specially constructed of stone and iron, with tiny, closely barred windows, so closely that there was always twilight in the great room, which took up a whole flat, and was crammed up to the ceiling with stacks of cloth, already cut and packed; amongst which stacks there ran deep but narrow passages, traversing the whole enormous mass. The twilight and the deep stillness which reigned in there gave this chamber an air of solemnity and of mystery. Only from time to time did a passing wagon go in by the main passage, bearing fresh pieces of goods, to vanish in the noiseless side-ways; for the sounds of the factory outside were all deadened by the cobwebs and the cotton dust on the panes, and never reached those dark deep gullies.

Bucholc could walk no longer now. He sat down close to the window on some stray pieces of percale, and meant to go out as soon as he was rested; but when he tried to rise, his legs bent under him, and he fell heavily backwards. He was, he felt, in a very bad state indeed. He wished to call out for help. He had not strength even for that; he could not so

much as utter a sound. It required an effort even to lift his eyelids and stare about him in fear upon those silent, great square bulks that stood round him with a sort of inanimate brooding and menacing solemnity.

Suddenly a wild, horrible feeling of dread seized him by the throat; he rushed like mad to the nearest window, threw himself at it, and attempted to call for help. But he could utter only a spasmodic bleat, and the desperate appeal he made was solely in his eyes, which he turned beseechingly on the workmen below, loading the coal-trucks in the yard.

No one came to him, and the factory went on surging and murmuring like some perpetually stormy sea; and he had no more strength at all. His hands slipped away from the grating, and he fell down upon the goods. With a fearful effort he rose up once more, and, stumbling over the piles of cloth that seemed rising to block the way, he collapsed a second time; and this time, instead of rising, he crawled on. He seized the air, and clutched at those stacks round him with fingers that already were ceasing to feel; he tore at the iron floor, until, with a pang as of a knife stabbing at his heart, he again clutched at the empty air, and with one horrible shriek, fell senseless on the floor.

This cry was heard; the workmen came running and stood helplessly around him in deadly fear, too terrified even to lay a finger on the body, which still was agitated by convulsive jerks.

There he lay, outstretched, with his eyes starting from their sockets, his features distorted, and his mouth open as for that last cry—his death-shriek—as grim as those piles of goods, once his; as helpless as those riches which surrounded his end. But that frightful shriek of a crushed existence, which had frozen on his lips, seemed still to resound in that dark chamber, beneath that ceiling of iron, and pass through those narrow side-ways, through the mountain of wares, through the very walls, to unite at last with the mighty waves of life, with which the town was seething and the factory roared.

CHAPTER XVI

LODZ was then dismayed by two occurrences: Bucholc's death, and the unprecedented rise in the price of cotton.

Bucholc dead!—With the speed of lightning the news flashed all through the town, and created a profound sensation. People would not believe it, shook their heads incredulously. The thing could not be!

"It's not true!" some declared with the most positive denial. That Bucholc who had always been alive, of whom they had talked those fifty years, whose every step had made men think, who had reigned absolutely over Lodz; that Bucholc whose wealth had dazzled them all; he, the power, the soul, the pride of the town! he, so cursed and so admired —dead? A kind of stupefaction came over the multitudes; they could not admit the simple fact of his death.

Concerning him thousands of legends were related in the offices, the workshops, and the factories of the town. About his life, his millions, his luck—about his iron and inflexible will, to which he forced everything and everybody to bend; about the genius (of its own kind) which he possessed—the ignorant masses understood nothing; they only saw the results, the prodigious fortune which had grown up in their sight and amongst them, while they, as before, possessed nothing.

Things quite unheard-of were told about the man. Some said he had machines to print counterfeit notes. Others, more ignorant still, and with something of peasant superstition about them yet, used to swear that the Devil was his ally; some even asserted that horns had been seen on his head, that he was the Devil himself. But no one would believe in a

natural death for him—the death which comes to all men.

Yet the news was true. Anyone who cared might go to the President's house and make sure. The great entrance-passage had been fitted up as a mortuary chapel, and hung with black stuffs strewn all over with big tears of silver. And there lay Bucholc himself, on a low catafalque, amidst palms, and flowers, and huge tapers flickering to the sounds of a dismal psalmody sung by choirs of clerics, succeeding one another incessantly. He was awaiting the day of his burial. Meanwhile he was on view to all those who were curious, and came and went away in crowds, eager to see how he looked—that legendary Bucholc, master of the lives of tens of thousands; that man of millions!

The people, hushed with awe and with an unaccountable sense of sorrow, stood in the presence of that power that was no more, who lay very quiet in his silver coffin, with his livid face, and a black crucifix in his hand.

He lay, his face looking towards the wide-open door, and seemed, with those red eyes and discoloured lids, to be gazing at the park, the factory walls, the chimneys belching forth columns of smoke; in short, at the kingdom that had been his—that universe called up out of nothingness by his will—the will of him that but now had been living to the fullest extent of his faculties, living but to hear the rumble of his machines, the whistling and the panting of his locomotives, bringing and carrying off enormous masses of raw and of ready materials of all sorts, produced by mental endeavour and the obedience of matter fettered by mind, in the huge factories of Bucholc.

Now the two Powers were face to face—the dead man and the living factory. The creator and enslaver of the forces of nature had become their slave, and from their slave was now turned into a mere worn-out tatter wrung dry to the very last drop by those same forces which he had subdued!

Knoll, arriving on Saturday, as Bucholc had announced, found him lifeless. Ordering some of his people to attend to the funeral, he at once saw to all the various affairs he had to settle.

In the house itself, an atmosphere of mourning prevailed. The whole of the floor lately occupied by him was now empty. Mrs. Bucholc sat as heretofore all day long at her knitting; but she dropped the stitches more frequently, and looked out of the window oftener.

At times, too, those pale faded eyes of hers shone bright with tears; and then she would glide through the empty rooms, and slip downstairs to contemplate the visage of her dead husband with amazement and terror; then she would creep back yet more silently to that solitude to which she found it so hard to get accustomed, and seek consolation and oblivion in prayers, which she would repeat after her maid, who read them to her aloud. At breakfast and dinner-time she would dress more carefully, and wait for her husband's coming, as she had so many years been accustomed to do, and when he did not come, she went back to her prayers and her knitting, listening with dread to the doleful lamentations that came up from downstairs, or to the parrot, walking restlessly about the apartments, and nervously clinging to the curtains or the furniture, or calling in a raucous voice: "Kundel! Kundel!"

The funeral took place a week later; such a funeral as Lodz had never yet seen. All the great factories suspended work for the occasion; all the workmen were desired to follow the coffin to the grave. For several versts Piotrovska Street was literally packed with people; and this immense wave of humanity in mourning carried floating upon its crest the great funeral chariot, with a canopy of interwoven palm-wreaths, under which lay a silver coffin, all covered with heaped flowers. In front of this chariot, and strongly marked on the grey background of the street and the blue of the sky, there fluttered, like many-coloured birds, but enveloped in clouds of crape, the banners of various Church fraternities and of all the associations in Lodz. A long train of priests, and several choirs, accompanied by the united bands of all the factories, were chanting the direful hymn of death, which with its sorrowful heart-rending sounds floated over the waving sea of heads, above the balconies

and casements crammed tight with spectators, up to the sun that rolled in the infinite azure.

The procession advanced but very slowly, on account of the crush, increased at every moment by new-comers from the bystreets. The family came first after the coffin. Then walked immediately afterwards the chief administrators, and the officials who managed Bucholc's numerous landed estates. And then came the workmen, divided into sections, according to their sexes and their factory occupations: weavers, spinners, calenders, dyers, cotton-printers, warehousemen, etc., with the managers and technicists and foremen at their head. And all the rest—a multitude numbering very many thousands—consisted of pretty nearly all the manufacturers in Lodz, together with their hands—the workmen in the other factories.

"It is endless!" Shaya remarked to his son and those in the carriage with him, following the funeral. He had, with knitted brows and perturbed looks, been intent on the canopy tossing above the heads of the multitudes. Time and again he would bow his head, pluck at his beard nervously, and gaze with feverish eyes on that coffin in which his rival and his enemy now lay.

Though he had many a time wished for it with fanatical hatred, this death had brought him no joy; he had no delight in the thought that now he should reign supreme in Lodz. The man had died, but his factories were there still. And, moreover, something akin to regret, a feeling of sympathy, perhaps interwoven with some thin threads of apprehension, was present in his soul. Oddly enough, he now experienced a sense of loneliness. Bucholc had died; and with him that inveterate hatred, of so many a year's duration, and envenomed by such continual struggles and rivalry. He had now no one to hate any more!

He looked into his own soul, not without amazement; he could not understand his state of mind, nor make out what had come over him.

"Bucholc is there!" he thought, with his eyes fixed upon the coffin, and a dull pain and dismay gnawing at his heart.

"Mendelsohn," Kipman asked him, "do you know the latest news of the cotton market?"

"I don't, and don't care to know. Stanislas may talk to you about that."

"But," Kipman persisted, "it's worth your while to read to-day's *Official Gazette*."

"I feel so poorly, so melancholy to-day; why do you bother me about cotton?"

"But why melancholy? Bucholc was older than you are. He's dead, and you'll live on this many a year!"

"Let me be, Kipman; these subjects are displeasing to me," he replied ill-humouredly, and again riveted his eyes on the undulating mass of heads the whole street was filled with. "Stanislas, where is Rose?"

"In the Grünspans' carriage, just after our own."

Shaya looked out of the window, and, seeing his daughter, smiled at her, but drew his head back directly to fall into a long reverie, which those with him had no mind to interrupt.

Rose was along with Mela, Vysocki, and Grünspan senior, in an open landau, with a pair of splendid jet-black horses. The girls were exchanging remarks about the crowd, and old Grünspan was expounding the state of the cotton market to Vysocki, who answered in monosyllables, being much more interested in looking at Mela, who that day looked unusually pretty and radiant.

"It's too much at a time: higher customs duties, higher railway tariffs for raw cotton, and again tariffs still higher for goods exported by rail to Russia! I tell you, all this coming on us together will play the devil with us so that half Lodz will be ruined for good. Ugh!—May I not be a prophet of evil!" And he spat with disgust.

"Then cotton has risen in price, has it?"

"Risen? You may well say so! Risen like a balloon.—Oh, the cotton will take no harm; but Lodz may well be on its last legs."

"I do not understand at all how this can be," Vysocki said,

endeavouring at the same time to follow the two girls' conversation.

"Not understand? It's clear as daylight.—A highway robber takes you by the collar and says: 'Your money! I have none, and won't work to get any.' The most iniquitous spoliation that ever was!"

"Ah, Mr. Cohn, how do you do?" he said, suddenly breaking off, holding out his hand to Leo Cohn from the carriage.

Cohn shook hands and went by with a number of young men.

"Mr. Halpern, just hear this: Bucholc has made his first 'playta,' but made a mess of it. Better luck another time. Ho, ho!" and he laughed heartily at his own joke.

"Mr. Cohn, death is no stroke of business to laugh at," Halpern replied gloomily. He was in a bad humour that day; walked with them all, but was persistently taciturn, and stooped forward to such an extent that his long-skirted coat was trodden upon. He felt so utterly unnerved that he was shaking all over, and more than once dropped the umbrella he always had by him, but would pick it up mechanically, wipe his coat-skirt, and gaze in a brown study at the faces of the millionaires gathered together for the funeral. Only when the cortège had passed into the New Market-place and turned off into Konstantynska Street, did he remark to Meshkoski, who was by his side: "Bucholc is dead, do you hear?—He had factories, millions of money, a position as high as a count's—and he's dead! And I have nothing, and have to meet a protested note to-morrow. But I am living! How good, oh how good the Lord God is!"

His voice shook with great and unbounded thankfulness; his face, gloomy till that moment, shone with profound satisfaction and the genuine delight which he felt in his own conscious existence.

"One fool the fewer, and one too many!" Meshkoski returned, and lagged behind to get alongside of Kozlovski, who, with his tall hat tilted back as usual, tapping his teeth with the top of his cane, and sporting trousers turned up as

high as his ankles, strutted along the line of slowly moving carriages, intently surveying all their feminine occupants.

"Do you know, Meshkoski, that Mendelsohn girl has no little *chic,* and there's a devil looking out of her eyes, too!"

"She's no concern of mine!—Come and have some beer: my throat is quite dry with this millionaire's parade."

"No, I'm going on to the cemetery. You see, I have noticed someone much to my taste in one of the carriages. Looked at her once—she was eyeing me. Looked at her again; she was eyeing me still."

"And you looked a third time, and she had not ceased to eye you?"

"Ah, but how she looked at me! Pitch-black, those eyes of hers; and pitch is sticky, as I well know."

"Well, good day to you. But have a care you don't get unstuck some day—with a stick! Here, you see, people don't take kindly to ogling and all that."

Leaving him, he returned to his acquaintances, trying to pick out someone he could ask to take beer with him.

"Mr. Cohn, have you heard the news about the cotton?"

"Yes, and I am thinking how on earth to make money by it, Mr. Horn!"

"Is it a fact that Bucholc has left a big sum of money for public purposes?"

"A thing to laugh at. Bucholc was not an ass."

"Ah, how are you, Welt?" Kurovski cried, meeting Moritz.

"Oh, I am getting on—as cotton is just now."

"That means you are well?"

"Superperfectly well," Moritz Welt replied, carefully articulating his words, as he shook hands with his acquaintances.

"When did you return?"

"Last night."

"Have you read about the tariffs?"

"Knew all about them three weeks ago, three weeks!"

"That's humbug; they were only published two days ago."

"What I've said I stick too."

Here someone in the crowd cried: "Silence!" Moritz had raised his voice too much.

They were quiet for a minute, and the priest's voice rose up like the tone of a question, to which there came the response of the choristers with the band; and their powerful voices, shut in between the high walls of the street, resounded in gloriously full harmony.

"What? You knew and made no profit out of it?"

"No profit? Whom do you take me for? Ask how much cotton Boroviecki and I have here in warehouse, how much at the station, and how much more is coming in from Hamburg these days, and I'll give you a few interesting figures."

"Moritz, you're too clever by half; you'll not live long!"

"Oh, I shall. Long enough to have a funeral like this one! But I say, where's Boroviecki?"

"Don't know. But he was along with us when we entered the market-place."

Moritz looked round but did not see him anywhere. He was lingering about by Lucy's carriage, which was stopped with the others in the market-place, for the crowd was too great to enter a narrow street immediately.

"Charles," Lucy whispered, "come nearer here, nearer to me."

"Will this do?" he asked, putting his head in at the carriage window.

"And will this do?" she answered, imprinting a passionate kiss on his ear.

He withdrew his head and stood leaning his shoulder against the carriage door.

"Why do they not go on?" grumbled Lucy's aunt, who accompanied her.

"Madam, I must now take leave of you."

"One instant more. Give me your hand, please." The words were said very low.

Charles darted a glance at the long line of carriages, in single file, and not yet in motion, and gave her his hand so as not to be perceived, his body concealing the movement. She swiftly caught it up to her lips, and stroked her own chin and neck with it.

"You crazy thing!" he muttered, withdrawing from the window to a respectful distance.

"I love you, Charles! Come to-day, you must. I want to tell you something of great importance," she whispered; her crimson lips, aflame, were pursed for a kiss, and her eyes shot fire.

"I will," he answered in a whisper: and then—"Till our next meeting, ladies," he said aloud.

"My husband will be here to-morrow; I hope you will not forget us."

He soon rejoined his friends and at once addressed Moritz. "Well, shall we go straight from the burial-ground to the railway?"

"The cotton arrived this morning. Have you got the money?"

"Yes, and will pay on the spot."

"When will you be out of Knoll's service?"

"I am already. We shall go to-morrow and have a good look at the buildings."

"That's right. I have engaged a mason for to-morrow, and we shall set to work at bricklaying in a few days."

"Where's Max?"

"His mother is very ill; we shall have another burial soon, I fear."

"Death has its good sides all the same," Kurovski remarked.

"As, for instance, the impartiality with which it sweeps away both useful and useless people."

"Or the hands getting a rest gratis to-day."

"Do you think so? Knoll has ordered half a day's salary to be knocked off the men's pay! Says the rest they take is an act of homage offered to the dear departed."

"That's good thrift; lessens funeral expenses. I must give an order to the same effect in my will."

"Well, Meshkoski, what are you pondering over so?"

"The foolery of all this!"

"Don't worry; it'll make no difference if you do. He's

dead; what's to be done? 'The tooth of Death hath laid its finger upon him,' as the Preacher saith."

"Do I care a fig? Bucholc is out of the running; and I"—putting his hand to his throat—"want some beer and have no one to drink with."

"Not with me at any rate; I'm off home instantly."

"I may find someone else."

They separated, each taking a different direction.

The funeral procession had now entered the narrow poplar-bordered side street that led to the cemetery. It was a mere lane, unpaved, and deep in thick black mud, which thousands walked through with bespattered feet; but full half of the crowd returned to the town on account of it.

The row of poplars was bare of leaves, weather-beaten, stripped of bark, and half killed by the deadly sewerage that ran down from the works in deep gullies. They stood, two rows of hideous crippled trees, mournfully waving their few branches with the remnant of life that was left to them, as if to display their woeful state and obtain redress from the men who passed. The procession from time to time burst forth in a grand sonorous chorus of voices, that swelled over the vast expanse of black fields drenched in water, and dotted with clumps of naked trees, huts, brick-kiln chimneys, and the shapes of a few windmills, which looked like monstrous butterflies, pinned down and fluttering their wings against the blue horizon.

Slowly the funeral train emerged from the town, proceeded along the miry road, passed the wretched, ruinous huts; and slowly did the surging human billows disappear behind the cemetery gates, and disperse amongst the pathways, lined with family vaults. But far away, amid thickets of leafless trees and black crosses, the many-coloured banners made their appearance, with long lines of people, and the flames of tapers; and above these the silver coffin, moving forwards on men's shoulders, swayed to and fro.

Silence followed, for the chants ceased, not a voice was heard, and the sounds of the band died away. There was

only the heavy crunching of passing footsteps, the tossing of trees in the wind, and the bells, tolling with a dull melancholy tone.

And then around the coffin there commenced the last comedy of death. A man, standing on an eminence, spoke pathetically of the virtues of the dead man, and of his merits; a second, in a tearful voice, bade a sorrowing farewell to him that was gone, and wept over the desolate people to whom he had been a father; a third, turning towards the coffin, spoke in the name of the family and the inconsolable friends of the dear departed; a fourth gave utterance to the feelings of the poverty-stricken multitudes around him (of those workmen driven there by threats), to whom the deceased had been a friend and a benefactor.

An ominous murmur ran through the crowd; a thousand sighs were heard, a thousand eyes shot flames, and that human sea was restless with tossing billows.

At last the obsequies came to an end. The coffin was at rest in its magnificent sepulchre, which stood enthroned on a rising ground, from which, through the gilded gratings of the door, the town was visible, wrapped in fog and smoke, and roaring the mighty hymn of Life in a thousand factories.

One after the other the bands of workmen drew near that throne and deposited their wreaths on the marble steps. It was the last act of homage from them. They slowly melted away, till the dead king of Lodz lay quite alone in the silver coffin, covered over with wreaths and garlands.

Stanley Vilchek did not wait till the end of it. When he heard the tolling of the bells, he muttered: "A merry thing it is indeed, to have so many millions and be forced to kick the bucket!" He spat disapprovingly on the ground, and left the place with Joe Yaskulski, who walked silently with him, and sighed.

"What are you whimpering about?"

"I am sorry for the man," Joe said with a shudder, and wrapped himself more closely in his wretched overcoat, made out of a student's old uniform.

"Joe, leave Baum's office. I want a confidential clerk. I'll take you up, and make a man of you."

"I can't; I must stay with Baum."

"But the man will go bankrupt one of these days. Don't be silly; I'll pay you five roubles a month more than he does."

"I can't. It's not right to forsake Baum in his trouble, and now I am almost the only man in his office."

"A fool you are! If I were as sentimental as all that, I should, like you, go barefoot and be everybody's servant all my days!"

He threw him a look of contempt, and left him near Piotrovska Street.

As he went, he thought of his other fellow students with scorn and pity. "A good-for-nothing lot! They'll rot in the factories, all of them!" Such would not be his fate, he was now quite sure of that. Not a mere servant of other men; not one of the wheels in the machine!

He walked on deliberately, in the full realization of his own powers, and his superiority and strength of mind borne in upon him by what he had done and what he meant to do. He accounted that day as the best in his life, the turning-point in his career; for that day he had done the first great stroke of business, the one which was to set him on his legs. He had purchased several acres of the land round Grünspan's factory, on two sides of it. He had bought them in secret, and was sure to sell at a profit; he knew positively that Grünspan was about to enlarge his factory, and would have to buy the land at Vilchek's price. He was really beaming with self-satisfaction. Certainly, the affair looked splendid, and his calculations could not possibly be wrong. The ground had long been for sale, and Grünspan had bargained for it this many a year, every year raising his bid by a few roubles more, but leisurely, sure that no one would purchase the ground but himself.

Now Vilchek, getting on the trail of so good an affair, had accordingly caught the owner in a net of crafty practices, friendly attentions, compulsory loans—till he became thereby

owner of the land. He had become the legal possessor of the estate that very morning. What a rage Grünspan would be in! The thought made him laugh for joy.

Holding his head proudly erect, he looked round upon the whole town as his prey, surveyed the storehouses crammed with goods, eyed the factories; and the savage greed of the serf within him swelled to gigantic proportions as he gazed upon the riches he saw. Ways and means were all the same to him. Any means were allowable provided they attained their end. Which was—to make money. He respected nothing but the law, nobody but the police. On all the rest he smiled down with mild disdain. Reputation, morality, rectitude? Bah, who cared for these things in Lodz? Who even took such nonsense into consideration?

And besides, rectitude—what was that? Had Bucholc been a man of rectitude? Who asked that? They only asked how many millions he left after him. To possess millions, grasp them in his hand, have them at his beck, and dominate with them!

He brooded thus as he walked towards the station, and his soul brimmed over with a frantic, almost agonizing desire for money, enjoyments, and masterdom over others. As a hungry dog will stare at the meat he sees, so he stared at the factories, the houses, the luxuries of the rich, the beautiful women, the palaces. An ancestral feeling was upon him—of hunger, come down to him from his forefathers, for ages downtrodden, trampled on by the mighty, driven away from the table of life's feast, overworked, underfed—and now his turn had come! He lifted up his head on high, spread out his hands like claws; he felt like a conqueror in possession, satiating his ancestors' appetities in their posterity.

"I shall get hold of everything, and be even with everybody!" he thought. And he recalled with bitterness the years of his childhood, spent in tending kine; and those when he had served in a monastery, and the beatings he had suffered; the wretchedness of all his family, the humiliations they had all undergone, the humiliation which his bene-

factors had by their assistance heaped upon him, and that which all his people had to bear. "And I shall be even with them for all that," he muttered, with this insane rancour growing up in his heart.

He had hitherto got hold only of the means to work by, had transacted business with whatever came to his hand, making money in what way soever had been possible. Manager of Grosglik's storehouses, he had meanwhile dealt besides in coal on his own account, dealt in timber, dealt in cotton remnants, dealt in eggs (which his family in the country procured for him)—in all sorts of odds and ends, in a word; and he had made trial of everything. They said he used to buy the so-called "red goods"—that is, those stolen from a factory during a conflagration; also that he had been guilty of usury, and—with Grosglik as associate—had done extremely shady things. So they said.

He knew what they said, and laughed it all to scorn. "Much I care about that!" he cried, as, passing along a side street, the memory occurred to him.

The street had fences on either side. Behind the fences rose storehouses for timber, for cement, for ironware, and lime, and coal. It had neither pavement nor side-walks, and was deep in mud, through which hundreds of heavily laden carts used to make their way. The coal storehouses extended to the left, at the foot of a high mound—a huge accumulation of railway coal, up which trucks were dragged, covered with the black grime from the coal that had been shot out there.

Vilchek lived close by, in a miserable plank-built hovel, whose flat roof was covered all over with black mud; it served him also as an office. He changed his clothes swiftly, pulled on a clean pair of long boots, and then set to work.

But he was too restless for that just then, too excited. The joy of the purchase made had got on his nerves; and then the memory of the funeral came back to him, and the rumble of the trucks piling the coal in heaps interfered with his work. So he flung his pen aside and set to pacing the office, now and then looking through his win-

dow at the pyramids of coal and at the storehouse trucks.

One of them would occasionally clatter off to be weighed, with such an earthquake of noise that everything in the hut would vibrate, and with that rattling and clattering an immense hubbub of human voices, mingled with the neighing of the horses, the thunder of the coal thrown out, and the whistles of the engines, came in through the open door, and floated into the dirty, neglected room up and down which Vilchek was striding, plunged in thought.

A workman popped his head in to report that a couple of gentlemen were waiting to see him outside, near the coal-trucks. Boroviecki and Moritz were standing close to the mounds. Vilchek, waiting for them to state their business, held out his hand to them. Moritz took and pressed it; Boroviecki feigned not to see it.

"We require several trucks, and at once."

"How many?—what for? where from? he asked curtly; Boroviecki's slight had annoyed him.

"As many as you can. For cotton. From the railway to my agency," Moritz answered.

The business was quickly transacted, and they went away.

"Ugh! a nobleman!" Vilchek grunted, in high dudgeon. Boroviecki had, on parting, put his hands in his pockets, and only nodded condescendingly. This slight he could not forget; this humiliation, too, his rancorous heart took note of. And it was all the more painful because undeserved.

But he had no time now to brood over grievances; as the day was drawing to its close, the activity in the storehouses increased exceedingly. Locomotives, constantly bringing lines of coal-laden wagons to the mounds, were crossing each other, belching forth clouds of smoke; and to the shrieks of ear-splitting whistles, and the clanking of the couplings, they forced their way on through the smoke and the dust, or, released from the load they had dragged, rushed away with a wild scream to the locomotive sheds. From the warehouses beneath, thickly coated with layers on layers of black dust, there arose multitudes of confused voices, raised in excitement, and the sounds of horses whinneying, whips cracking,

and drivers shouting, together with the racket in the street, and the vague but mighty murmur of the smoke-hidden town that lay all around.

Vilchek ran off at full speed to his office, then to the coal-trucks, and to the men bringing wares to the station. He was everywhere, splashing about in the mud until, feeling himself quite worn out, he sat down to rest on an empty car.

It was twilight, and the after-sunset glowed in the sky in purple streaks, which painted the glittering zinc roofs a blood-red hue, and crimsoned the volumes of smoke that floated above them.

Now night was coming on. A turbid gloomy greyness spread through the streets, crept along the walls, crouched about in nooks and corners, dimmed the outlines, blotted out the colours, and, swallowing up every remnant of day, wrapped the town in dark mourning weeds, amongst which lights were beginning to spring up.

And now night had fallen. The town blazed all over with bright lamps. The vague sounds grew more audible, the rumblings more distinct, the clattering louder, the clamour more thunderous; till finally all these noises joined to form a melody, savage, yet wonderfully grand, sung both by the machinery and by the men, making the air to quiver and the ground to quake. Lodz was working by night—and working with frantic energy.

"You rag of worn-out nobility, be damned—you!" Vilchek growled between clenched teeth. Boroviecki's outrage was rankling within him unforgettably, and with his chin on his fists, he looked up to the sky.

He was roused from his musings by the voice of a man passing down the street, singing some doggerel with a chorus rather like "Tra-la-la-boom-de-ay!" He went back to his office, settled all the business that remained on hand, and dispatched the last railway trucks; then he locked every door, took his supper (cooked for him by one of the workmen), and walked out into the town.

He liked going thus to and fro without aim or purpose, to feast his eyes on men and factories, to sniff and pry all

about the place, to inhale those whiffs of air saturated with coal-tar effluvia and the odours of dyes. His head was turned with the mighty greatness of Lodz; the prodigious riches hid in warehouses and factories made his eyes gleam with a greedy flame; awoke tremendous visions in his mind, and filled it to overflowing with longings, ever more intense, to rule and to revel.

That mad whirlpool of life, that river of gold that spread all over the town, intoxicated him with irresistible potency, mesmerized him, filled him with unspeakable thrills of craving; incited him to fight, to win, to plunder.

And he loved it, that Promised Land—as a beast of prey loves the illimitable wilderness, full of creatures for it to devour. He adored it, that Promised Land, flowing with—gold and blood! He hankered, lusted for it; stretched out his insatiable arms to it, crying out with the voice of victory and the voice of hunger: "Mine, mine!"

And for a while he felt that it was to be his for ever, that he would not let loose his prey till he had sucked dry its veins of gold.

A LIST OF THE CHIEF CHARACTERS IN *THE PROMISED LAND*

(given in the order of their appearance in the text.)

CHARLES BOROVIECKI (borrov-yetsky), of gentle birth, the son of a country landowner and bred in the traditions of his class, has broken away from them, made special studies in chemistry, dyes, and cotton printing, and has besides a great talent for new tints and original designs, and has become manager in that line to the greatest factory in Lodz.

MATTHEW, his manservant of many years' standing, greatly attached to him, but inclined to drink.

MAX BAUM (bah-oom), Charles's first partner, the son of a German factory-owner in Lodz who will not use steam, only hand looms, and is slowly getting ruined. Max works hard and much, sleeps heavily, and drinks a great deal of beer.

MORITZ WELT (velt), Charles's second partner, once his fellow student, now running an agency in Lodz; clever, but crafty and self-seeking.

ROBERT MURRAY, an Englishman, Boroviecki's subordinate in the dyeing department. Very efficient in his own specialty. Personally ugly and a hunchback, and withal perpetually dreaming of marriage.

PRESIDENT HERMAN BUCHOLC (boo-holts), a manufacturer of genius, and owner of the factory where

Charles works; a hard man, who grinds his workmen and tyrannizes cruelly over everybody; old and very ill, which makes his temper worse.

HORN, a Pole of German extraction, the son of a Warsaw dealer; learns business in Lodz at Bucholc's factory; very idealistic, kind-hearted, and quick-tempered.

LEO COHN, a Jewish friend of Welt, and, like him, an agent.

MÜLLER, senior, a German, who, starting work in Lodz as a simple weaver, by dint of industry, thrift, and shrewdness, has now got millions, a great factory, and a palace he has built, but does not live in; can scarcely read or write, and, though kindly, is coarse.

MADA, Müller's only daughter, a naïve, though practical, German girl, deeply, though timidly, in love with Charles Boroviecki.

LUCY ZUKER (tsooker), the most beautiful Jewess in all Lodz, who secretly adores Charles Boroviecki; wife of ZUKER, a big factory-owner, who has got a fortune by making cheap shoddy goods.

WILHEIM MÜLLER, Mada's brother, a rather wild student of the Berlin German type; cares nothing for factories, and lives as fast a life as his father is willing to pay for.

SHAYA MENDELSOHN, a very big Orthodox Jewish manufacturer, wants to be the foremost man in Lodz.

MME LAPINSKA, nicknamed "The Baroness," and MME STEPHANIE STECKA, two leading figures in the Colony, a flat where a number of Polish women and girls, employed in the town, lodge and board together, and eke

out their resources by giving dinners to clerks and officials. The "Baroness" is looked upon as their Lady Principal.

ROSE MENDELSOHN, the youngest daughter of Shaya, a girl of strong passions, who wants to be loved for herself, not for her money; a plain young woman with a slight limp, bitter against everybody but a couple of girl friends, and bored to death with everything.

KUROVSKI (koorosky), of gentle birth, but a first-rate chemist; has run through a fortune in his early youth, and is building up another in Lodz; a brilliant talker, an assemblage of seeming contradictions, and on familiar terms with Boroviecki.

KESSLER, a partner in the firm of Kessler & Endelman. It is not stated whether his race is Semitic or not, but he despises Poles, and is fond of Polish factory girls, whom he abuses his position to seduce—until retribution comes.

KNOLL, son-in-law, representative, and finally successor of Bucholc. As hard and stingy as his father-in-law, but externally quite a gentleman.

ANTKA (Antonina), a common girl for whom Max Baum has a weakness.

FELIX FISHBIN, a Jewish dealer, unfortunate in money matters, but with a great reputation as a wit, or rather as a merry-andrew.

DR. MIECZYSLAUS (m'yechyslaws) or MIECIO (m'yechyo) VYSOCKI (vysotsky), a scientist of advanced ideas, strongly idealistic, with innumerable poor patients to whom he devotes himself disinterestedly, living with and partly on his mother, who has some resources of her own. She is a strong anti-Semite, whereas he is quite the reverse.

SOHA, a peasant from Boroviecki's country home, Kurov (kooroof).

ANKA (Anne), Boroviecki's cousin and fiancée; a girl of great benevolence, purity, and nobility of mind. She loves him with all her heart, but is proud, sensitive, and not expansive.

DR. JULIUS HAMERSTEIN (hammershtine), called "Hamer" for short; a homœopathist and vegetarian, in attendance on Bucholc, who holds him for a quack, but has in vain tried all the regular physicians.

KOZLOVSKI (kozlosky), a young man from Warsaw, come to start an agency in Lodz, for which he has no qualifications, but spends his time about the streets; a good musician and thinks himself a lady-killer.

GRÜNSPAN, senior, owner of a large factory. Moritz Welt's maternal uncle; rich, but with a bad reputation for dishonest practices.

SIGISMUND GRÜNSPAN, his son, a student in Warsaw University, pedantic and conceited.

MELA (Melania) GRÜNSPAN, Grünspan senior's youngest daughter. Brought up in Warsaw amongst Poles, she is in great sympathy with them and their ideals of life, and is quite out of touch with her own family when she returns to Lodz, though they are proud of her. She is beautiful, graceful, and enjoys an excellent reputation for intelligence and morality.

FELA (Felicia) and TONI (Antonina) two other girl friends of Rose; the former, under a mask of childlike *naïveté*, is said to hide "the makings of a Messalina"; the latter is even more life-weary and blasée than Rose herself.

BERNARD ENDELMAN, a sleeping partner in the firm of Kessler & Endelman. A rich young Jew, indifferent to money, bitterly sarcastic; called a Lodzian Hamlet.

AUGUSTUS, Bucholc's footman, slavishly devoted to his tyrant.

KAMA, a Polish girl at the Colony; in love with Horn, but after a very idealistic and infantine fashion.

ADAM MALINOVSKI, junior, a technical engineer at Shaya's, and a habitué at the Colony.

MME EMMA LIKIERT (Likk-yert), formerly the mistress of Charles Boroviecki, who has broken with her.

CASIMIR, or Kazio, TRAVINSKI, a cotton-mill-owner of noble family, who has sunk much money in his works and is on the verge of ruin, partly on account of his own and his wife's æsthetic and expensive tastes.

MME NINA TRAVINSKA, his wife, a woman of simple elegance and subtle charm, greatly admired by everyone.

DAVID HALPERN, a man who loves Lodz because of its greatness; always singing its praises and rejoicing in its growth, though he is himself very poor, and has failed in business several times; a profound believer in the goodness of Jehovah.

JOSEPH YASKULSKI, son of a ruined landowner, incompetent, but proud of his noble birth; a clerk in old Mr. Baum's factory; a very hard-working, bashful, awkward, sentimental young fellow.

SOPHY MALINOVSKA, the sister of Adam Malinovski, a factory girl at Kessler's.

MALINOVSKI, SENIOR, a man who has come down in the world, ruined by the part he took in the insurrection of 1863. Returning from his exile in Siberia, he has found a place as mechanician at Kessler's factory.

STANISLAS MENDELSOHN (Jewish name, SZMUL or SAMUEL, which he objects to), the eldest son of Shaya, and manager of his father's firm.

LEOPOLD LANDAU, heir to a great Jewish firm, and suitor for the hand of Mela Grünspan.

MR. AND MME ENDELMAN, millionaires with æsthetic tastes, which they combine with a shrewd business instinct. Endelman is a very near relative of Bernard, but actively engaged in business.

GROSGLIK, the principal banker in Lodz; a first-class extortioner, who makes money by all sorts of disreputable means; also an enemy of Boroviecki.

MARY GROSGLIK, his only daughter, an ugly, sickly girl, for whom even her father's money cannot easily find a husband.

MESHKOSKI, a technical engineer who believes overwork and capitalism to be an evil, works only enough to get a living, and gives up all his leisure to science and art for their own sake.

STACH (Stanislas) VILCHEK, the son of a poor peasant of Kurov. Gifted with much natural ability, he has been educated by the help of gentlefolk, goes into business, and makes money by every possible means; is devoured by hatred for those above him, and by the craving he feels to enjoy the pleasures he has never had; a peasant gone wrong, he may either make a fortune or end his days in jail.

FATHER SIMON, parish priest in Kurov; a most kind-hearted man, but very bluff in his dealings.

ADAM BOROVIECKI, called "Old Mr. Adam," the father of Charles, paralysed on one side, but always good-humoured.

MR. ZAYONCHKOSKI, a neighbour, who for many a year has come twice weekly to Kurov to play at cards with Mr. Adam and the priest.

A NOTE ON THE TYPE IN WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

This book is set (on the Linotype) in Elzevir No. 3, a French Old Style. For the modern revival of this excellent face we are indebted to Gustave Mayeur of Paris, who reproduced it in 1878, basing his designs, he says, on types used in a book which was printed by the Elzevirs at Leyden in 1634. The Elzevir family held a distinguished position as printers and publishers for more than a century, their best work appearing between about 1590 and 1680. Although the Elzevirs were not themselves type founders, they utilized the services of the best type designers of their time, notably Van Dijk, Garamond, and Sanlecque. Many of their books were small, or, as we should say now, "pocket" editions, of the classics, and for these volumes they developed a type face which is open and readable but relatively narrow in body, although in no sense condensed, thus permitting a large amount of copy to be set in limited space without impairing legibility.

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